

FEAR

HERE ARE TALES THAT WILL USHER YOU INTO
THE HAUNT OF



CLASSICS
#9

\$4.95

FEAR

FEATURING...



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



CHASTLY



#1



#2



#3



#4



#5



#6



#7



#8



#9



#10

the CLASSICS series

Pictured above are the covers of the first ten issues of the new series of full color EC CLASSICS. Like this issue you are reading, each issue of the EC CLASSICS contains **two** covers and **eight** complete EC stories chosen from a particular EC title.

Don't miss a single issue! Ask your favorite **Comic Book Shop** to stock these EC CLASSICS, or **subscribe** directly from the publisher.

A six-issue subscription is \$25. (\$40. outside U.S.A.). Single back issues are \$6.00 each. All prices include postage. (Note: the subscription price includes mailing by third-class mail. For six issues mailed **first class**, the subscription price is \$35.)

When I was a wild-eyed EC Fan-Addict in the 1950s, my very favorite EC title was **THE HAUNT OF FEAR**. I still have vivid recollections of the **thrill** of receiving a new issue of **HAUNT** in the mail . . . remember that this was an **event** that happened only six times per year . . . sliding the comic out of that sturdy manila envelope . . . seeing the new "Ghastly" cover for the first time.

Graham Ingels, whom Bill Gaines dubbed "Ghastly" Graham Ingels in a letter column, was and is a **painter** . . . a fine artist. His comic book style and his skill with the inking brush . . . his own personal combination of dry-brush and fine-line inking . . . gave his gothic horror stories a mood that has never been equalled to this day.

This EC CLASSIC #9 contains, appropriately, the origin story of the Old Witch, "A Little Stranger". Here are the eight stories and two covers from **THE HAUNT OF FEAR** #14 and #15.

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THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! DRAG YOUR *PALPITATING CORPSES* INTO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, KIDDIES! YEP, IT'S YOUR *HOSTESS IN HYSTERICS*, THE OLD WITCH, READY TO RUSTLE UP ANOTHER *REVOLTING RECIPE* IN MY *REEKING CAULDRON*! SMELL IT? IT'S A *SPECIAL BREW* THIS TIME...*EXTRA SPECIAL!* READY? GOT YOUR *DRIBBLE-CUPS* FASTENED? GOT YOUR *SHROUDS* TUCKED UNDER YOUR CHINS? *GOOD!* THEN I'LL *SERVE THE Slobbering Story* I CALL...

A LITTLE STRANGER!



FOR A MOMENT, THERE IS A DEAD SILENCE! THE FLICKERING LIGHT OF THEIR TORCHES CASTS AN EERIE GLOW OVER THE BODY SPRAWLED BEFORE THEM! THEY STARE WITH HORRIFIED FACES AT THE CORPSE! ONE OF THE MEN STOOPS AND POINTS...

LOOK! ON HIS NECK!
TWO PUNCTURES...
THE MARK OF
A VAMPIRE!

IMPOSSIBLE!
THE BODY HAS
BEEN PARTIALLY
DEVoured! I
TELL YOU IT IS THE
WORK OF A
WEREWOLF!



AN OLDER MAN SHAKES HIS HEAD...
NO, PETER! YOU ARE WRONG! THE BLOOD HAS BEEN DRAINED FROM THE BODY! IT IS A VAMPIRE!



BUT A VAMPIRE DOES NOT FEAST UPON THE FLESH, VICTOR!

HE IS RIGHT, VICTOR! A WERE-WOLF FEASTS UPON THE FLESH!



THEN EXPLAIN TO ME, IF YOU CAN, THE HOLES IN THE NECK!

HMMMM! A WEREWOLF WOULD NOT DO THAT! UNLESS... UNLESS...

GASP! UNLESS HE WAS KILLED BY BOTH!



BOTH!? YOU MEAN...?



A VAMPIRE... AND A WEREWOLF... STALKING THE COUNTRYSIDE... TOGETHER!

MANY MILES FROM THE HORRIFIED GROUP OF VILLAGERS, HIGH IN THE BAVARIAN ALPS THAT TOWER ABOVE THEIR HEADS, IN A CAVE LONG SINCE FORGOTTEN BY THOSE WHO GUIDE MOUNTAIN-CLIMBERS, A ROMANTIC SCENE IS TAKING PLACE...

TO YOU... MY DEAR! TONIGHT... YOU WERE... DIVINE!

AND TO YOU... MY LOVE! TONIGHT WAS... ANOTHER TRIUMPH!



BUT AS WE DRAW CLOSE TO THE LOVING COUPLE, WE NOTICE SOMETHING STRANGE! SOMETHING TERRIFYING! THE WOMAN, ALTHOUGH VERY BEAUTIFUL, HAS SHARP LITTLE FANGS! FOR SHE... IS A VAMPIRE...

PERHAPS WE WILL STAY HERE FOR A WHILE, MY SWEET! I AM SO TIRED OF WANDERING!

PERHAPS!



... AND THE MAN'S EARS ARE POINTED... HIS FACE IS COVERED WITH HAIR... HIS EYES GLEAM YELLOW IN THE GANDELIGHT! FOR THE MAN... IS A WEREWOLF...

MAYBE... MAYBE IF WE LOOK HARD... WE WILL FIND SOME- ONE HERE WHO WILL MARRY US?

WE WILL SEE, MY DEAR! COME! IT IS ALMOST DAWN!



THE COUPLE RISE AND STROLL, ARM AND ARM, DEEPER INTO THE CAVE! SOON, THEY COME UPON A SIMPLE PINE COFFIN, LYING IN THE SHADOWS...

GOOD MORNING, MY DARLING! UNTIL *NEXT MONTH*, WHEN *AGAIN THE MOON IS FULL!*

GOOD MORNING, MY DEAREST!



THE WOMAN CLIMBS INTO THE COFFIN AND LIES DOWN! SOON, HER EYELIDS CLOSE! AS THE CROW OF A ROOSTER DRIFTS UP FROM THE VALLEY BELOW, SHE FALLS ASLEEP...

TILL NEXT MONTH, MY DEAREST!



THE MAN SIGHS AND CLOSES THE COFFIN LID! THEN HE TURNS TOWARD THE CAVE OPENING WHERE THE FIRST GREY STREAKS OF DAWN FILTER THROUGH THE OVERGROWN ENTRANCE! HIS YELLOW EYES GROW DARK...

...THE HAIR ON HIS FACE RECEDES! HIS POINTED EARS ROUND OFF! THE SHARP CLAWS OF HIS FINGERS SHORTEN...

...AND ONCE AGAIN, HE TAKES ON HUMAN FORM... THE FORM OF A SEEDY MOUNTAIN HERMIT...



FAR BELOW, THE MEN ARE JUST RETURNING WITH THE CORPSE OF THEIR FELLOW VILLAGER...

HE HAS BEEN MURDERED! THE WORK OF A VAMPIRE... ...AND A WEREWOLF! HEAVEN PROTECT US!



IN HIS CAVE, THE HERMIT CURLS UP BESIDE THE COFFIN AND CLOSES HIS EYES! A SMILE CROSSES HIS TWISTED LIPS! HE WHISPERS SOFTLY...

ELICIA! MY ELICIA!



THE HERMIT'S THOUGHTS GO BACK...BACK TO THAT TIME SO LONG AGO WHEN FIRST HE'D COME UPON THE FORBIDDEN PLANT GROWING HIGH IN THE BAVARIAN ALPS...

WOLFSBANE!
GOOD LORD!



HE'D STUMBLED UPON THE PLANT ACCIDENTLY! ONE OF ITS SPINY THORNS HAD SCRATCHED HIS FOREARM...

I...I'M BLEEDING!
THE WOLFSBANE HAS
INFECTED MY BLOOD!



... AND LESS THAN A MONTH LATER, HE'D LEARNED THE TRUTH! THAT FIRST NIGHT, WHEN THE MOON WAS FULL, HE'D CHANGED...

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?
MY NAILS GROW LONG! MY
EARS TWITCH! MY FACE...
MY FACE...



HIS REFLECTION IN THE SHIMMERING POOL HAD TOLD HIM ALL THERE WAS TO KNOW...

I...I AM A
WEREWOLF!



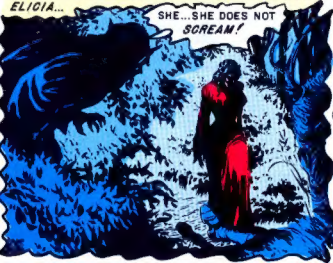
THAT NIGHT, HE'D KILLED AND FEASTED UPON HIS FIRST VICTIM! THE SECOND MONTH, AT THE TIME OF THE FULL MOON, HE'D KILLED AGAIN! BUT THE THIRD MONTH, AS HE'D BENT OVER HIS THIRD VICTIM...

WHAT'S THAT? SOMEONE...
SOMEONE IS COMING!



HE'D DARTED INTO THE BUSHES AND WAITED! SHE'D COME UP TO HIS LATEST VICTIM! ELIGIA... BEAUTIFUL ELIGIA...

SHE...SHE DOES NOT
SCREAM!



NO! ELIGIA HAD NOT SCREAMED! INSTEAD, SHE'D STOOPED AND BEGUN TO DRINK HER FILL...

SHE...SHE'S A
VAMPIRE!



HE'D FLUNG SAY FROM HIS HIDING PLACE AND STOOD OVER HER, POINTING...



HE...HE IS MINE!

YOU... ABANDONED HIM!

THEY'D QUARRELED! THEN...

WAIT! WHY FIGHT? THERE IS ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF US!



HUH? BOTH?

SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL! VERY BEAUTIFUL! IT WAS EASY TO ACCEPT HER OFFER! AFTER THEY'D FINISHED...



MY NAME IS ELICIA!

AND MINE IS ZORGO!

THEY'D FALLEN IN LOVE! LOVE AT FIRST FRIGHT. YOU MIGHT SAY! ZORGO'D AGREED...

WE WILL MEET NEXT MONTH WHEN THE MOON IS FULL ONCE AGAIN!

I WILL WAIT FOR YOU, ELICIA!



EVERY MONTH WHEN THE MOON WAS FULL, THEY'D WANDERED OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE... KILLING... TOGETHER...

I WORRY, MY DARLING! WHAT IF SOMEONE SHOULD FIND YOUR RESTING PLACE?

THEY WOULD DRIVE A STAKE THROUGH MY HEART... AND DESTROY ME!



SO ZORGO'D APPOINTED HIMSELF GUARDIAN OF ELICIA'S COFFIN! ON MOONLESS NIGHTS... WHEN HE WAS NORMAL AND ELICIA SLEPT... HE'D MOVED HER COFFIN FROM HIDING PLACE TO HIDING PLACE, KEEPING WELL AHEAD OF THE ENRAGED VILLAGERS THAT SCoured THE COUNTRYSIDE, SEARCHING FOR THEM...

I TAKE CARE OF YOU, MY SWEET!



AND EACH NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON, THEY'D VOWED...

SOMEDAY... SOMEDAY MY DEAR, WE WILL FIND SOMEONE WHO WILL MARRY US!

OH, ZORGO! I HOPE SO!



SUDDENLY, ZORGO STARTS FROM HIS DAY-DREAM! VOICES ECHO THROUGH THE CAVE! THE VILLAGERS HAVE DISCOVERED HIS LATEST HIDING PLACE...



THE EXPLOSION OF A PISTOL THUNDERS THROUGH THE CAVE AND ZORGO PITCHES FORWARD... A SILVER BULLET IN HIS HEART...



THEN THE STEADY RAP-RAP-RAP OF ROCK ON WOOD AS THEY POUND THE STAKE INTO ELICIA'S CHEST...



THE ANGRY VILLAGERS CARRY THE COFFIN... WITH ZORGO'S AND ELICIA'S BODIES... BACK TO THEIR LITTLE HAMLET...



WE HAVE DESTROYED THEM! BOTH OF THEM!

WE WILL BURY THEM IN THE DEVIL'S GRAVEYARD!

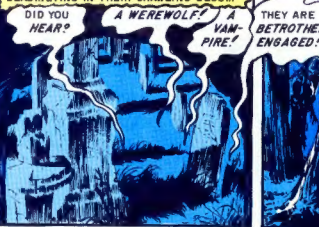
THE DEVIL'S GRAVEYARD IS A PLACE WHERE MURDERERS AND OTHER CREATURES OF EVIL ARE INTERRED! THERE... ELICIA, THE VAMPIRE... AND ZORGO, THE WEREWOLF ARE BURIED...



GOOD RIDDANCE!

HURRY! IT IS ALMOST NIGHT!

AS THE TOWNSFOLK HURRY BACK TO THEIR HOMES, AND DARKNESS FALLS UPON THE DEVIL'S GRAVEYARD... STRANGE SOUNDS ARE HEARD... THE SOUNDS OF THE DEAD... LYING IN THEIR CRAWLING BEDS...



DID YOU HEAR?

A WEREWOLF! A VAMPIRE!

THEY ARE BETROTHED... ENGAGED!

LATER, IN THE BLACK OF NIGHT... WHEN THINGS OF EVIL CRAWL FROM BENEATH ROTTED SHELTERS, AND CEMETERIES YAWN... A STRANGE SCENE UNFOLDS! CORPSES PUSH THEIR WAY UP THROUGH MAGGOT-INFESTED GRAVE MUD...



HURRY!

THERE'S GOING TO BE A WEDDING!

THE VAMPIRE!

AND THE WEREWOLF! THEY'RE GETTING MARRIED!

AND SO, AS HOWLING WINDS SHRIEK THROUGH OPEN MAUSOLEUMS...AS TOTTERING REMAINS OF EVIL STUMBLE TOWARD THE SPOT...AS CREATURES OF THE NIGHT LEER FROM BEHIND TOMBSTONES...AS FOUL ODORS OF DECAY AND ROT WAFT THROUGH THE NIGHT AIR...ELICIA AND ZORGO ARE WED! THE MOANING OF THE DEAD THEIR ORGAN MUSIC... THE SCREAMING OF BANSHEES THEIR CHOIR...



THEIR HONEYMOON SUITE IS A MAUSOLEUM...A SLAB OF MARBLE THEIR BED! AS IS THE CUSTOM, THE BRIDE IS CARRIED ACROSS THE THRESHOLD...THE STAKE STILL AWKWARDLY JUTTING FROM HER CHEST...



AND SOON ALL IS QUIET AGAIN IN THE DEVILS GRAVEYARD! THE CREATURES OF EVIL RETURN TO THEIR RESTING PLACES...THE GRAVES ARE CLOSED...THE WIND DIES DOWN! DAWN BREAKS SILENTLY...ON A PEACEFUL SCENE...



AND SO IT REMAINS...FOR DAYS...AND WEEKS...AND MONTHS! THEN, ALMOST A YEAR LATER, THE STIRRING BEGINS AGAIN! THE DARKNESS FALLS, AND THE CREATURES MOVE! THE GRAVES CRACK OPEN AND ROTTED THINGS PUSH UP...

HURRY! IT IS ALMOST TIME! TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT!



THINGS OF EVIL STUMBLE TOWARD THE MAUSOLEUM! OTHERS PEEK THROUGH THE DOOR...THE BROKEN WINDOWS! THE WIND HOWLS...THE BANSHEES SCREAM...

TONIGHT, ELICIA...

AND ZORGO...

EXPECT...



INSIDE THE MAUSOLEUM, ELIGIA CRADLES THE LITTLE THING IN HER ARMS! ZORGO STANDS OVER THEM... PROUDLY! THE CREATURES OF EVIL TITTER AND GIGGLE...

ISN'T IT *GUTE*?

WHAT *IS* IT,
ELIGIA?

IT... I... I THINK IT'S...
A GIRL!

HEE, HEE! YEP! IT WAS A *GIRL*, KIDDIES! IT HAD A *DEAD VAMPIRE* FOR A *MOTHER*, AND A *DEAD WEREWOLF* FOR AN *OLD MAN*! AND I WAS A *DARLIN'* LIL' TYKE, TOO! HUH? OH! YEAH! IT WAS *ME*... THE *OLD WITCH*! YOU FIENDS HAVE BEEN *ASKIN'* ME WHERE I *CAME FROM*, SO I DECIDED TO *TELL* YOU! OH... BY THE WAY! HOW'D YOU LIKE TO ATTEND A *FAMILY REUNION*? *MINE*! NO? GEE, THAT'S *TOO BAD*! WE ALWAYS HAVE *ONE SMELL OF A TIME*! NOW I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THE *VAULT-KEEPER*! DIG YOU LATER!

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

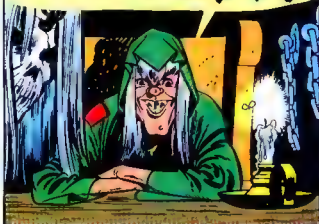
HEH, HEH! GREETINGS, MY FINE FETTERED FIENDS! YEP, IT'S YOUR HOST IN HORROR, THE VAULT-KEEPER, READY TO NARRATE ANOTHER NAUSEATING TALE FROM MY COLLECTION! SO COME INTO THE VAULT OF HORROR, SIT YOURSELF DOWN ON THAT DEAD-MAN'S CHEST, AND I'LL BEGIN THE BLOOD-CURDLING YARN I CALL...

TAKE YOUR PICK!

THE RAGGED LITTLE URCHIN STOOD UPON THE PORCH OF THE BRADEN HOME, SHIVERING FROM THE BITING WIND THAT SWEEPED ACROSS THE SNOW-COVERED LAWN. HIS COAT WAS TORN AND THREADBARE. HIS PANTS, PATCHED. HE HELD A PALE LITTLE HAND UP SHAKILY AS STUART BRADEN SWUNG OPEN THE DOOR AND STARED DOWN AT HIM...

WELL! WHAT DO YOU WANT?

P- PLEASE, MISTER! MY DADDY AIN'T WORKIN'! I AIN'T HAD ANYTHIN' T' EAT FOR TWO DAYS! COULD YOU SPARE A...



STUART BRADEN SNARLED AT THE SALLOW-FACED CHILD BEFORE HIM...

GO ON, YOU LITTLE BEGGAR! SCRAM! GO ON BACK ACROSS THE TRACKS WHERE YOU CAME FROM!

ONLY A QUARTER... MISTER! I GOT A LIL SISTER! SHE



STUART SLAMMED THE DOOR IN THE PLEADING BOY'S FACE! EMMA, HIS WIFE, STOOD BEHIND HIM...

DIRTY LITTLE BRAT! SCORNING ON DECENT FOLKS...
HOW COULD YOU BE SO CRUEL, STUART?



MR BRADEN SPUN AROUND, GLARING AT HIS WIFE...

YOU MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, EMMA!
BUT THE POOR CHILD LOOKED HALF-STARVED, STU...



IF I GAVE HIM SOMETHING, I'D HAVE 'EM ALL COMING HERE... BEGGING! THEY'D LINE UP OUT THERE...
I DON'T SEE HOW YOU CAN BE SO GOLD-HEARTED!



THAT'S THE WAY TO GET ALONG IN THIS WORLD, EMMA! YOU'VE GOT TO BE COLD-HEARTED! OTHERWISE, PEOPLE STEP ALL OVER YOU!



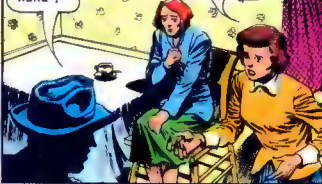
NONSENSE, STUART! A LITTLE KINDNESS NEVER HURT ANYONE!

BAH! BE NICE TO SOMEONE...JUST ONCE...AND THEY'LL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU...TRY TO SQUEEZE EVERYTHING THEY CAN FROM YOU! NOT ME! I'M NO SUCKER!
YOU'VE GOT A HEART OF ICE, STUART! SOMEDAY, YOU'LL CHANGE!



BUT STUART BRADEN DIDN'T CHANGE! IN FACT, HE GOT MUCH WORSE...

I'M HOME, EMMA! SUPPER READY? I... I... WHAT'S SHE DOING HERE?
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING FOR THE GALSEYS, STUART! THEY'RE DESTITUTE!



IT'S NO CONCERN OF MINE, EMMA! JOE GALSEY MADE HIS OWN BED. NOW LET HIM LIE IN IT!
BUT, STU! JOE WAS YOUR BUSINESS PARTNER! MRS. GALSEY CAME HERE TODAY TO BEEG FOR TO GIVE HIM A JOB!



I WON HIS SHARE OF THE BUSINESS FAIR AND SQUARE, MRS. GALSEY! JOE GAMBLER AND LOST!



BUT... HE'S BEEN OUT OF WORK SINCE THEN!

THAT'S HIS TOUGH LUCK! I CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR HIM! THERE'S JUST NO SPOT FOR HIM IN THE OFFICE!



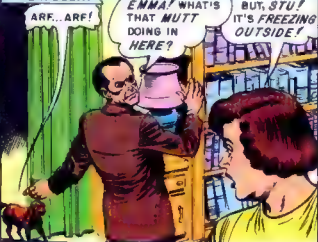
STU! FOR GOD'S SAKE! DON'T BE SO... SO COLD-HEARTED!

YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS, EMMA! GOOD-BAY, MRS. GALSEY!



MY HUSBAND HAS A HEART OF ICE, MRS. GALSEY! I... I'M SORRY! I CAN SEE... SOB... SOB...

EMMA AND STUART HAD NO CHILDREN! THEY DID HAVE A DOG...



ARF... ARF!

EMMA! WHAT'S THAT MUTT DOING IN HERE?

BUT, STU! IT'S FREEZING OUTSIDE!

I DON'T GIVE A HOOT! GET HER OUTSIDE... THE MANGHEY MONGREL! I WON'T HAVE HER TRACKING UP THE RUG...



STUART! THE POOR THING WAS SHIVERING IN HER KENNEL! SHE'LL... SHE'LL FREEZE OUT THERE! PLEASE... STU! JUST THIS ONCE...

EITHER YOU TAKE HER OUTSIDE OR I WILL, EMMA!



HOW CAN YOU BE SO CRUEL... STUART? SO... SO...

SO COLD-HEARTED? GO AHEAD! SAY IT! I'VE GOT A HEART OF ICE! WELL, MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT! NOW GET THAT MUTT OUTSIDE!



SOB... SOB... COME, LADY! COME ON, GIRL! COME TO MAMA... SOB... SOB...

ONE NIGHT, AS MR. AND MRS. BRADEN WERE DRIVING HOME FROM A VISIT TO EMMA'S MOTHER...

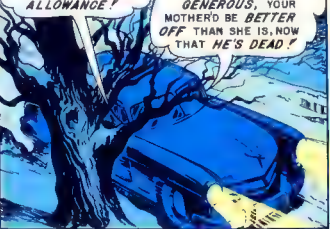
SHE DIDN'T LOOK VERY WELL TONIGHT, DID SHE STUART?

I DIDN'T NOTICE! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? ASK ME TO GIVE HER MORE MONEY?



IT WOULDN'T HURT! TEN DOLLARS A WEEK ISN'T VERY MUCH TO LIVE ON THESE DAYS! YOU COULD CUT DOWN ON MY ALLOWANCE!

NOTHING DOING! I'VE GOT MYSELF TO THINK OF! IF YOUR OLD MAN HADN'T BEEN SO GENEROUS, YOUR MOTHER'D BE BETTER OFF THAN SHE IS, NOW THAT HE'S DEAD!



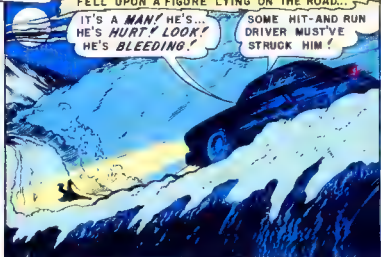
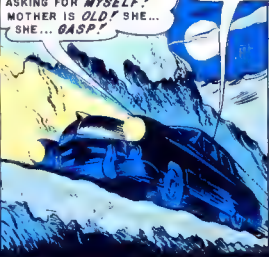
PLEASE, STUART! I'M NOT ASKING FOR MYSELF! MOTHER IS OLD! SHE... SHE... GASP!

HUH? WHAT'S THAT?

THE HEADLIGHTS OF THE BRADEN AUTOMOBILE FELL UPON A FIGURE LYING ON THE ROAD...

IT'S A MAN! HE'S... HE'S HURT! LOOK! HE'S BLEEDING!

SOME HIT-AND-RUN DRIVER MUST'VE STRUCK HIM!



STUART PRESSED DOWN ON THE ACCELERATOR AND SPED PAST THE INJURED MAN...

STUART! STOP! HE NEEDS HELP!

NOT ME, EMMA!

I MIND MY OWN BUSINESS! I KEEP MY NOSE CLEAN! I DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN OTHER PEOPLE'S TROUBLES!

STUART! HE'S HURT! HOW COULD YOU?

LET SOME OTHER SUCKER STOP! IT'S NO CONCERN OF MINE!

...SOB...YOU'RE INHUMAN, STUART! NO ONE COULD BE SO COLD-HEARTED! SOB! SOB!



THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

WHAT ARE YOU
BAWLIN' ABOUT?

JOE... SOB...
JOE GALSEY!
YOUR EX-
BUSINESS PART-
NER! HE COM-
MITTED SUICIDE!



HMMPH! COULDN'T
FACE IT, EH?
TOOK THE EASY
WAY OUT!'

HE LEFT HIS
WIFE AND CHILD
PENNYLESS!
WE'VE GOT TO
MAKE IT UP
TO HER!



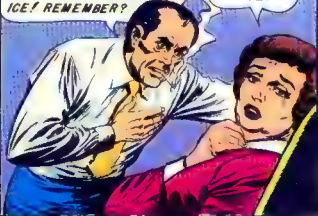
THERE ARE AGENCIES
TO TAKE CARE OF
PEOPLE IN HER
PREDICAMENT,
EMMA! NOT ME!
IT'S NOT MY
BUSINESS!

STUART!
YOU.. YOU
COULDN'T!



OH COULDN'T I, EMMA? ARE YOU
FORGETTING? I'M COLD-
HEARTED STUART... THE
MAN WITH THE HEART OF
ICE! REMEMBER?

HOW... SOB...
SOB... HOW
COULD I
FORGET?



A FEW DAYS LATER, EMMA RECEIVED THE NEWS...

IT'S... MOTHER, STU! SHE'S
ILL! SHE NEEDS A
DOCTOR?

SO WHAT AM I
SUPPOSED TO DO?
I GIVE HER TEN
BUCKS A WEEK!
LET HER SEND
FOR ONE!



SHE DOESN'T HAVE THE MONEY,
STUART! PLEASE LET ME
CALL A DOCTOR FOR HER!
I'LL PAY FOR IT!

ALL RIGHT! BUT IT
COMES OUT OF YOUR
ALLOWANCE! SHE'S
YOUR MOTHER!



SO EMMA SENT FOR A DOCTOR TO TAKE CARE OF
HER SICK MOTHER...

HOW IS SHE, DOCTOR?

YOUR MOTHER IS IN
SERIOUS CONDITION.
MRS. BRADEN! SHE NEEDS
TO BE HOSPITALIZED
IMMEDIATELY! AN
OPERATION IS NECESS-
SARY! THIS WILL COST
A GREAT DEAL!



NATURALLY, STUART WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS TURN OF EVENTS...

WHAT? A HOSPITAL?!
AN OPERATION?! AND
WHO'S GOING TO PAY
FOR THIS?

STUART! IT'S MY
MOTHER! SURELY,
IN SUCH AN
EMERGENCY...

WHAT DID YOUR OLD LADY EVER
DO FOR ME? SUPPOSE THE
OPERATION DOESN'T HELP?
IT'LL BE THROWN OUT
MONEY!

HOW CAN YOU...SOB...
LOOK AT IT...SO
COLDLY?

BECAUSE SHE ISN'T
MY MOTHER! SHE'S
YOURS! THAT'S
HOW!

FOR GOD'S
SAKE,
STUART...

AND WHEN THE DOCTOR CALLED...

I...I'M SORRY,
DOCTOR! MY
HUSBAND... SOB...
SOB... REFUSES...
SOB... SOB... TO
SOB... PAY FOR...
SOB...

BUT YOUR
MOTHER
MAY DIE,
MRS.
BRADEN!

I...I KNOW! SOB!
D... DO THE BEST
YOU... YOU CAN,
DOCTOR! I'M ...
SOB... SORRY!

I'M HELPLESS
UNDER THE
CIRCUMSTANCES,
MRS. BRADEN!
YOUR MOTHER
NEEDS A
SPECIALIST!

EMMA HUNG UP AND TURNED TO STUART! HIS FACE
WAS A RIGID MASK...

I...I HATE
YOU,
STUART BRADEN!

HMMPH!

EMMA STARED OUT OF THE WINDOW, THE TEARS STREAM-
ING DOWN HER FACE! THE GLISTENING SNOW GLARED IN
HER EYES, CAUSING THEM TO TEAR EVEN MORE! SUD-
DENLY...

GASP!
LADY!

EMMA HURRIED OUT TO THE STILL FORM LYING HALF OUT OF THE KENNEL! SHE PICKED IT UP

THE DOG WAS STIFF! FROZEN STIFF! THE DOG WAS DEAD...

HE...SOB... HE KILLED YOU! HE MADE ME LOCK YOU OUT...SOB... AND YOU FROZE...SOB... YOU FROZE...SOB... TO DEATH...

EMMA CAME INTO THE HOUSE GRADLING THE DEAD DOG IN HER ARMS! SHE STARED AT STUART...

S'MATTER WITH YOU?

LADY! SHE... SHE'S DEAD!

STUART SHRUGGED! EMMA'S EYES BEGAN TO BULGE! HER CHEEKS GREW HOT! THE PHONE RANG...

HELLO? YES! THIS IS MRS. BRADEN!

I...I'M SORRY, MRS. BRADEN! I DID ALL I COULD! YOUR... YOUR MOTHER JUST DIED!

EMMA HUNG UP AND WENT INTO THE KITCHEN! WHEN SHE CAME OUT, SHE HAD HER ARMS BEHIND HER BACK! SHE MOVED TOWARD STUART, HER VOICE SHAKING UNCONTROLLABLY! SHE PRACTICALLY SCREAMED...

MURDERER!
ICE-HEARTED
MURDERER!

EMMA!
DON'T LOOK
AT ME LIKE
THAT!

WHEN THE POLICE CAME TO THE BRADEN HOME IN ANSWER TO THE NEIGHBORS' FRANTIC PHONE CALLS, THEY FOUND EMMA KNEELING BESIDE STUART'S BODY, CHIPPING AWAY AT HIS CHEST WITH A BLOOD-SMEARED ICE-PICK! SHE'D BEEN AT IT FOR SOME TIME! THEY COULD TELL! AS SHE CHOPPED, SHE'D MUTTER HYSTERICALLY...

ICE-HEARTED...SOB...SOB...
ICE...HEART...SOB...
ICE ICE...EH...EH...

HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S MY WARNING LITTLE STORY FOR THIS ISSUE, KIDDIES! AFTER THE MEN IN THE LITTLE WHITE COATS TOOK EMMA AWAY, THE CORONER EXAMINED WHAT WAS LEFT OF STUART BRADEN'S BODY! KNOW WHAT HE FOUND IN THE GAPING HOLE EMMA'D TORN IN STU'S CHEST? YEP! YOU GUESSED IT! CHOPPED ICE! BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE VAULT, FIENDS, CARE FOR A COLD DRINK? NO? HMMMM! TOO BAD! BYE, NOW!

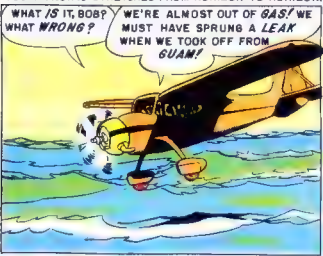
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IN THIS GRUESOME TALE OF
TERROR, EVERYTHING IS...
SHIP-SHAPE!



THE ENGINE OF THE TINY PLANE SPUTTERED AND COUGHED! DOWN BELOW, THE CHOPPY WATERS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC STRETCHED FROM HORIZON TO HORIZON...

INSIDE THE PLANE, THE FOUR PASSENGERS STARED IN HORROR AT THE WHITE NEEDLE OF THE FUEL GAUGE AS IT TREMBLED OVER THE *EMPTY* MARK...



WHAT IS IT, BOB?
WHAT WRONG?

WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF GAS! WE
MUST HAVE SPRUNG A LEAK
WHEN WE TOOK OFF FROM
GUAM!

HOW LONG
CAN WE
LAST, BOB?

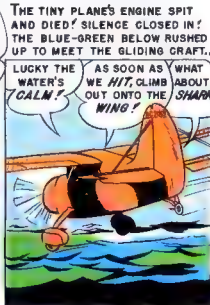
ANOTHER TEN
MINUTES, PERHAPS!
PROFESSOR! SEE
ANYTHING DOWN
THERE? AN ISLAND...
OR A SHIP?

NOT A
THING!
GOD HELP
US! WE'RE
ALL GOING
TO DIE!

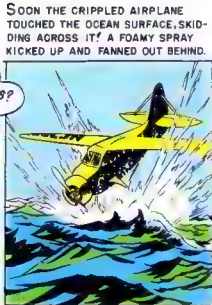




TAKE IT EASY, PROF! BOB CAN SET US DOWN ON THE WATER! THERE'S A RUBBER LIFE-RAFT STOWED BACK THERE! HOLD ON, FOLKS! WE'RE GOING IN!

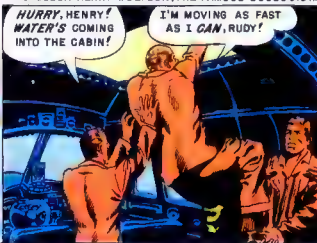


THE TINY PLANE'S ENGINE SPIT AND DIED! SILENCE CLOSED IN! THE BLUE-GREEN BELOW RUSHED UP TO MEET THE GLIDING CRAFT... LUCKY THE WATER'S CALM! AS SOON AS WE HIT, CLIMB OUT ONTO THE WING! WHAT ABOUT SHARKS?



SOON THE CRIPPLED AIRPLANE TOUCHED THE OCEAN SURFACE, SKIDDING ACROSS IT! A FOAMY SPRAY KICKED UP AND FANNED OUT BEHIND.

FINALLY, THE PLANE CAME TO A STOP, RESTING HALF-SUBMERGED IN THE CHOPPY WATER! THE FOUR PASSENGERS SCRAMBLED OUT ONTO THE WING! FIRST, PROFESSOR HENRY WOLFSON, THE FAMOUS ZOOLOGIST.



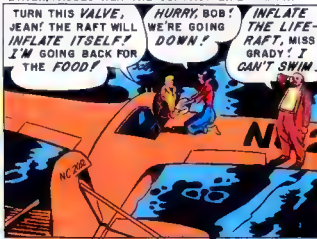
HURRY, HENRY! WATER'S COMING INTO THE CABIN! I'M MOVING AS FAST AS I CAN, RUDY!

DOCTOR RUDOLF ZERGER, THE PROFESSOR'S COHORT, A FAMOUS BIOLOGIST, FOLLOWED...



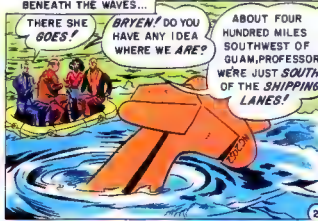
LET ME GIVE YOU A HAND, MISS GRADY! THANK YOU, DOCTOR! LET'S GO, JEAN! THE PLANE WON'T STAY AFLOAT TOO LONG! I WANT TO GET THIS LIFE-RAFT INFLATED...

AFTER JEAN GRADY, PROFESSOR WOLFSON'S SECRETARY, CLIMBED OUT ONTO THE WING, THE PILOT, ROBERT BRYEN, PASSED HER THE COMPACT LIFE-RAFT...



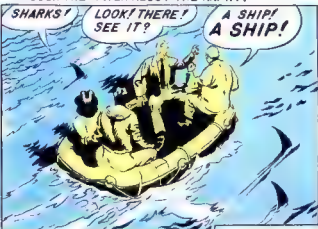
TURN THIS VALVE, JEAN! THE RAFT WILL INFLATE ITSELF! I'M GOING BACK FOR THE FOOD! HURRY, BOB! WE'RE GOING DOWN! INFLATE THE LIFE-RAFT, MISS GRADY! I CAN'T SWIM!

SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, THE FOUR SURVIVORS SAT HUDDLED IN THEIR RUBBER LIFE-RAFT, WATCHING THE DISABLED PLANE TURN TAIL UP AND SINK BENEATH THE WAVES...



THERE SHE GOES! BRYEN! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE WE ARE? ABOUT FOUR HUNDRED MILES SOUTHWEST OF GUAM, PROFESSOR! WE'RE JUST SOUTH OF THE SHIPPING LANES!

TWO DAYS LATER, THE SMALL SUPPLY OF FOOD AND WATER BOB HAD MANAGED TO SALVAGE HAD BEEN USED UP! THE SURVIVORS WATCHED WITH MORBID FASCINATION AS SEVERAL BLACK FINS KNIFED THROUGH THE WATER ABOUT THE RAFT. . .



SHARKS! LOOK! THERE! SEE IT? A SHIP!

THE BLACK SILHOUETTE OF A SMALL TANKER LOOMED UP TO THE EAST! PROFESSOR WOLFSON BEGAN TO WAVE HIS JACKET FRANTICALLY...



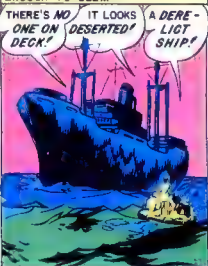
HELP! HELP! START PADDLING! HURRY! SIT DOWN PROFESSOR! YOU'LL UPSET THE RAFT AND THOSE BLASTED SHARKS'LL GET US!

AS THE TINY LIFE-RAFT NEARED THE SLOWLY MOVING TANKER...



THEY DON'T SEEM TO SEE US! BOB! DO YOU NOTICE SOMETHING STRANGE...? YOU'RE RIGHT, JEAN! THERE'S NO SMOKE COMING FROM THE STACKS!

SOON, THE SURVIVORS HAD APPROACHED THE TANKER CLOSE ENOUGH TO SEE...



THERE'S NO ONE ON DECK! IT LOOKS DESERTED! A DERELICT SHIP!



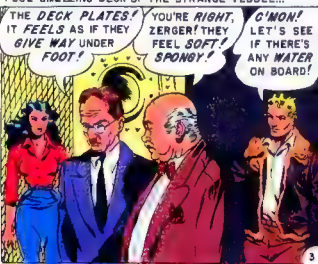
WHAT'S THAT STRANGE SMELL? BOB! I'M FRIGHTENED! DERELICT SHIP OR NO... WE'RE GOING ABOARD! AT LEAST IT'S AFLOAT, AND THERE MAY BE SOME FOOD ON IT!

A FRAYED ROPE-LADDER HUNG OVER THE SIDE OF THE DESERTED TANKER! BOB TIED THE RAFT TO IT...



PHWEH! IT SMELLS MUSTY... MOLDY! THE HULL SEEMS TO BE COVERED WITH SOME KIND OF MOSS! I'LL GO FIRST! YOU NEXT, JEAN! THE PROFESSOR AND THE DOG WILL FOLLOW!

SOON, THE FOUR CRASH-VICTIMS STOOD UPON THE FOUL-SMELLING DECK OF THE STRANGE VESSEL...



THE DECK PLATES! IT FEELS AS IF THEY GIVE WAY UNDER FOOT! YOU'RE RIGHT, ZERGER! THEY FEEL SOFT! SPONGY! G'MON! LET'S SEE IF THERE'S ANY WATER ON BOARD!

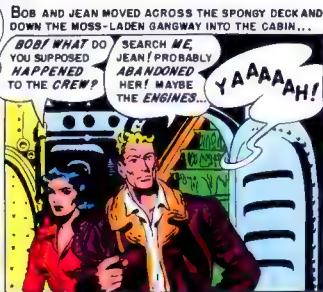


YOU GO, BRYEN! I WANT TO EXAMINE THIS FUNGUS THAT SEEMS TO COVER THE ENTIRE SHIP!

OKAY, PROFESSOR! SUIT YOURSELF! COMING, JEAN?

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, BOB!

I'LL STAY WITH HENRY, MR. BRYEN!



BOB! WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSED HAPPENED TO THE CREW?

SEARCH ME, JEAN! PROBABLY ABANDONED HER! MAYBE THE ENGINES...

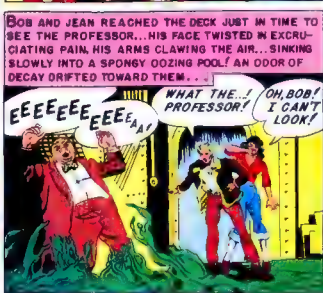
YAAAAAH!



GOOD LORD! WHAT WAS THAT?

THE PROFESSOR! HE SCREAMED!

MR. BRYEN! HELP! COME QUICKLY! OH, MY GOD...



EEEEEEEEEEA!

WHAT THE...! PROFESSOR!

OH, BOB! I CAN'T LOOK!

FINALLY THE PROFESSOR'S SCREAMS SUBSIDED AND HE SANK BELOW THE DECK-SURFACE! THE OOZING POOL SEEMED TO HARDEN OVER THE SPOT...

IT'S... SOB... HORRIBLE! HORRIBLE!

WHAT HAPPENED, DOCTOR ZERGER?



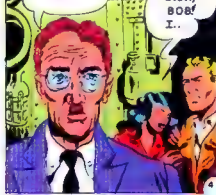
HENRY HE... HE WANTED TO EXAMINE THE FUNGUS THAT COVERS EVERYTHING! HE TOOK OUT HIS POCKET KNIFE AND STARTED TO SCRAPE THE DECK! THEN... COUGH CHOKE...

GO ON, DOCTOR! THEN...



HE SEEMED TO CUT THROUGH SOME SORT OF MEMBRANE! A FOUL-SMELLING POOL OZZED FROM THE INCISION! IT... IT ENGULFED HIM! HE... CHOKE... HE... JUST SEEMED TO DISSOLVE! YOU... YOU SAW THE REST!

I... I FEEL SICK, BOB! I...



JEAN PASSED OUT IN BOB'S ARMS!
DOCTOR ZERGER SCREAMED AT HIM...

BE CAREFUL, BRYEN!
PUT HER DOWN
GENTLY!

JEAN!
JEAN,
HONEY! OH,
LORD! I WISH
WE HAD SOME
WATER!

WE'VE GOT TO BE
CAREFUL NOT TO
DAMAGE THE
MEMBRANE THAT
COVERS THE SHIP!
OTHERWISE WE'LL
SUFFER THE SAME
FATE AS PROFESSOR
WOLFSON!

WHAT IS
IT, DOCTOR?
WHAT'S
HAPPENED
TO THIS
TANKER?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT PETRIFIED
WOOD IS, BRYEN? IT'S WOOD
THAT HAS TURNED TO STONE!
YET, THE STONE SHOWS EVERY
GRAIN... EVERY FIBRE... EVERY
PORE OF THE WOOD! THE STONE
TOOK THE WOOD'S FORM!
UNDERSTAND?

WHAT'S
THAT GOT
TO DO
WITH THIS
SHIP?

THIS SHIP IS LIKE A PIECE OF PETRIFIED
WOOD! ONLY IT HASN'T TURNED TO
STONE! SOME FUNGUS... SOME STRANGE
LIVING MATTER TOOK OVER THIS SHIP...
ABSORBING IT... ASSUMING ITS FORM!
THIS SHIP IS THAT LIVING
MATTER NOW!

JEAN!
G'MON,
BABY!
WE'VE
GOT TO
GET OUT
OF HERE!

JEAN OPENED HER EYES! SHE SHUDDERED! BOB
LIFTED HER IN HIS STRONG ARMS...

LET'S GO,
DOCTOR!

PUT HER DOWN! YOU'RE
BOTH TOO HEAVY...

DOCTOR ZERGER'S WARNING CAME TOO LATE! BOB
FELT THE SPONGY DECK GIVE UNDER HIS FEET... LIKE A
PIECE OF PAPER TEARING! DOCTOR ZERGER LUNGED
FORWARD...

LOOK OUT!

BOB FELT A STINGING PAIN IN HIS LEFT FOOT AS
DOCTOR ZERGER SHOVED HIM HARD! HE AND JEAN
WENT SPRAWLING! THE DOCTOR WAS CAUGHT IN THE
SUCKING GULPING POOL THAT OZZED FROM THE SPOT
WHERE THE YOUNG COUPLE HAD JUST BEEN STANDING...

YAAAAAAGGH!

DON'T LOOK,
BABY! IT...
IT'S... HOR-
RIBLE!

SOB...
SOB...

SOON THE DOCTOR'S SCREAMING DIED, AS ONLY HIS CLUTCHING HAND REMAINED ABOVE THE SHIMMERING POOL...



...AND EVEN THAT SOON DISSOLVED INTO IT! BOB LOOKED DOWN AT HIS LEFT FOOT! THE SHOE HAD BEEN EATEN AWAY! THE SOCK, TOO! THE RAW AND BLEEDING FLESH APPEARED AS IF IT HAD BEEN DIPPED IN MOLTEN METAL...



BOB! YOU'RE HURT!

IT'S NOTHING JEAN!

BOB TOOK JEAN'S ARM AND GUIDED HER SLOWLY...CAREFULLY... TO WHERE THE FUNGUS-COVERED ROPE-LADDER HUNG OVER THE SIDE OF THE SHIP...



EASY, NOW! TAKE IT EASY! LET'S GET OFF THIS... THIS THING!

THANK GOODNESS YOU TIED THE LIFE-RAFT UP INSTEAD OF SETTING IT ADRIFT!

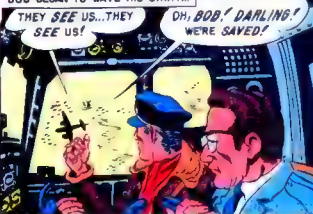
THE YOUNG COUPLE SCRAMBLED DOWN TO THE LIFE-RAFT AND PADDLED AWAY FROM THE NIGHTMARISH VESSEL...



I'D RATHER FACE THE HARD-SHIPS OF THE OPEN SEA THAN STAY ON BOARD THAT HORROR!

DON'T WORRY, HONEY! THEY'LL SPOT US! THEY'RE PROBABLY OUT LOOKING FOR US RIGHT NOW!

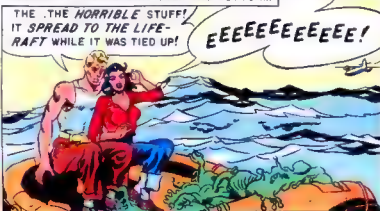
THE NEXT DAY...THEIR MOUTHS PARCHED FROM LACK OF WATER, THEIR STOMACHS ACHING FROM HUNGER... BOB AND JEAN SPOTTED THE PLANE HIGH OVERHEAD! BOB BEGAN TO WAVE HIS SHIRT...



THEY SEE US...THEY SEE US!

OH, BOB! DARLING! WE'RE SAVED!

SUDDENLY BOB LOOKED DOWN AND GASPED! JEAN FOLLOWED HIS TERRIFIED GAZE! FROM A RUPTURED SPOT ON THE LIFE-RAFT'S AIR-TUBE, A SICKLY, FOUL-SMELLING, SUCKING, GULPING OOZE POURED OUT... SPREADING OVER THE BOTTOM...



THE...THE HORRIBLE STUFF! IT SPREAD TO THE LIFE-RAFT WHILE IT WAS TIED UP!

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

HEE, HEE! YEP! DOESN'T A STORY LIKE THAT MELT YOUR HEART? IT DID BOB'S AND JEAN'S! IN FACT NOT ONLY THEIR HEARTS...BUT THEIR WHOLE BODIES MELTED AS THE GOO FILLED THE RAFT-FLOOR! HOW WAS THE LIFE-RAFT PUNCTURED SO THE STUFF OOZED OUT? WELL, IT SEEMS THAT BOB'S BIG TOE HAD A HANG-NAIL, AND HE GOT EXCITED WAVING TO THE PLANE! OKAY! SO IT WASN'T MUCH OF A KICK! ACTUALLY...



HEE, HEE...IT DIDN'T TAKE VERY MUCH! NOW COMES THE CRYPT-KEEPER! 'BYE!

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! ONE MORE TO GO, AND THEN YOU CAN ALL RETIRE FOR YOUR NIGHTMARES! YEP! IT'S YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER'S CHANCE TO TERRORIZE YOU, NOW! COME INTO THE CRYPT OF TERROR! PLOP DOWN ON THAT PLANK, AND I'LL TELL YOU A DELICIOUS LITTLE TALE, GUARANTEED NOT TO BORE YOU! IT'S CALLED...

THIS LITTLE PIGGY...



NORTH OF DELHI, NEAR MEERUT ON THE RIVER GANGES IN INDIA, A YOUNG BRITISH OFFICER REINED UP HIS PANTING STEED AND POINTED OFF TOWARD THE GRASSY CLEARING BEFORE HIM...

LOOK, SIMIA! IN THE
BRUSH! A
WILD BOAR!

I SEE, SAHIB! I SEE
HIM! THIS LOOKS LIKE
GOOD HUNTING
GROUND FOR BOAR!



THE BRITISH OFFICER AND HIS INDIAN SERVANT SPURRED THEIR HORSES AND CONTINUED ON THEIR TRIP! SEVERAL HOURS LATER, THEY NEARED A WALLED SETTLEMENT...

THERE'S THE GARRISON, SIMIA!

A SENTRY SEES US, SAHIB! HE SIGNALS US TO STOP!



THE SENTRY LEANED OVER THE STOCKADE WALL, AIMING HIS RIFLE.

HALT, YOU TWO! WHAT BUSINESS DO YOU HAVE WITH THE GOVERNOR?

I AM LIEUTENANT HORACE STURDY... ROYAL BENGAL LANGERS! GOVERNOR STURDY IS MY UNCLE!



OH, YES, LIEUTENANT! THE GOVERNOR IS EXPECTING YOU! OPEN THE GATES!

OPEN THE GATES!



THE STOCKADE GATES WERE SWUNG BACK AND LIEUTENANT STURDY AND HIS SERVANT SIMIA RODE INTO THE GARRISON ENCLOSURE...

HORACE! MY BOY! GOOD TO SEE YOU!

UNCLE FELIX! YOU'RE LOOKING WELL!



LATER, AT TEA, LIEUTENANT STURDY QUERIED HIS UNCLE...

I SEE THERE'RE PLENTY OF WILD BOAR IN THESE PARTS, UNCLE! WHEN IS THE NEXT HUNT?

HUNT? OH, NO! WE HUNT NO BOAR IN MEERUT, HORACE!



WHAT? YOU HAVE NO TENT CLUB, UNCLE? YOU DON'T GO PIG-STICKING HERE?

HEAVENS, NO, M' BOY! THE BOAR IS A SACRED ANIMAL IN MEERUT! THE INDIAN TRIBESMEN HERE WORSHIP IT!



BAH! YOU ACTUALLY WORRY ABOUT WHAT THOSE HEATHEN DEVILS THINK? NOT ME! THE FIRST CHANCE I GET, I'M GOING...

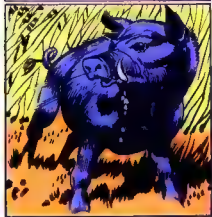
YOU'LL DO NO SUCH THING, HORACE! I FORBID IT! IT MIGHT MEAN A NASTY UPRISING IF YOU WERE TO KILL ONE OF THE SACRED BOARS!



BUT IGNORING HIS UNCLE'S WARNING, BEFORE DAWN THE NEXT DAY, LIEUTENANT STURDY AND HIS INDIAN SERVANT RODE OUT OF THE GARRISON ENCLOSURE ARMED WITH SPEARS...

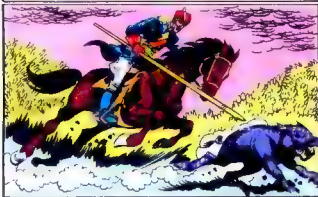
HALF AN HOUR LATER THE TWO MEN SPOTTED THEIR QUARRY NOSING ABOUT IN THE LOW GRASS OF AN OPEN CLEARING...

SPURING HIS HORSE, THE LIEUTENANT BORE DOWN UPON THE UNSUSPECTING BOAR, HIS SPEAR RAISED! THE BEADY-EYED ANIMAL TURNED, SNORTING, AT THE SOUND OF THE ONRUSHING HORSE...



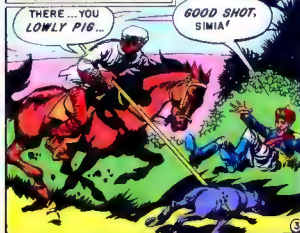
DESPITE ITS AWKWARD APPEARANCE, A BOAR IS QUITE SWIFT! LIEUTENANT STURDY'S QUARRY SPUN AROUND AND STARTED OFF THROUGH THE LOW GRASS! THE LIEUTENANT'S SWIFT STEED QUICKLY CLOSED THE GAP BETWEEN HIM AND THE SCURRYING ANIMAL...

SUDDENLY, THE CRAFTY WILD HOG 'JINKED' OR TURNED SHARPLY IN ITS TRACKS! LIEUTENANT STURDY PULLED UP SHARPLY ON THE REINS, AND HIS HORSE REARED...



THE LIEUTENANT HUNG FOR A MOMENT, AS IF SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR... THEN FELL TO THE GROUND! THE SQUEALING BOAR SWUNG TOWARD HIM, ITS RED-EYES BLAZING... ITS LETHAL TUSKS LOWERED! IT CHARGED...

SIMIA SPED ACROSS THE CLEARING AND, AS HE CROSSED BETWEEN THE PROSTRATE LIEUTENANT AND THE CHARGING WILD BOAR, PLUNGED HIS LANCE INTO THE SNORTING HOG'S BACK...



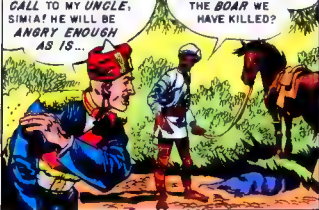
THE FATALLY INJURED BOAR ROLLED OVER AND OVER AND LAY QUITE STILL! SIMIA DISMOUNTED AND STOOD OVER IT! LIEUTENANT STURDY GOT TO HIS FEET AND DUSTED HIMSELF OFF...

WE...WE'D BETTER NOT MENTION MY CLOSE CALL TO MY UNCLE, SIMIA! HE WILL BE ANGRY ENOUGH AS IS...

AS YOU WISH, SAHIB! WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THE BOAR WE HAVE KILLED?

WHY, YOU'RE GOING TO PREPARE IT THE WAY WE DO IN KADIR, SIMIA! I'LL SHOW YOU HOW! ONE TASTE OF A WELL-ROASTED BOAR, AND UNCLE WILL FORGET TO BE ANNOYED WITH ME!

VERY GOOD, SAHIB! COME! THE SUN IS COMING UP! YOUR UNCLE WILL BE RISING SOON!



LATER, IN THE GARRISON KITCHEN, LIEUTENANT STURDY SHOWS SIMIA HOW TO PREPARE ROAST-BOAR...

FIRST YOU BOIL THE ANIMAL IN THIS VAT OF SCALDING WATER, SIMIA! THAT IS HOW YOU REMOVE THE BOAR'S BRISTLES...

YES, SAHIB!

AFTER YOU'VE BOILED THE HAIRS OFF, YOU ROAST THE BOAR ON A SPIT OVER A BED OF RED-HOT COALS!

YES, SAHIB!

YOU'LL SERVE THE ROASTED BOAR ON A WOODEN PLATTER WITH AN APPLE IN ITS MOUTH TONIGHT AT DINNER, SIMIA!

YES, SAHIB!



AND SO, THAT NIGHT...

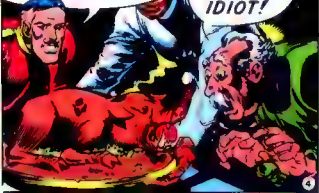
I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU, UNCLE! TONIGHT WE FEAST UPON SOMETHING SPECIAL! ALL RIGHT, SIMIA!

A SURPRISE, HORACE? HOW NICE!

SIMIA ENTERED, CARRYING THE ROASTED BOAR! ITS SUGGULENT ODOR FILLED THE DINING-ROOM! IT LAY, CROUCHING, UPON THE GRAY-STAINED PLANK... AN APPLE IN ITS MOUTH...

YES, UNCLE! TONIGHT WE EAT ROAST BOAR!

GOOD LORD! HORACE! YOU IDIOT!



ONE OF THE MEERUT SERVANTS STAINED IN HORROR AT THE ROAST BOAR! THE GOVERNOR EXPLODED...

GET THAT BLASTED THING OUT OF HERE!

BUT, UNCLE! AREN'T YOU EVEN GOING TO TASTE IT? IT'S DELICIOUS!



GOVERNOR STURDY SHOT A GLANCE AT THE NATIVE SERVANT WHOSE FACE NOW WAS A GRIM MASK SHOWING NO EMOTION...

I TOLD YOU ABOUT THE NATIVES IN THESE PARTS, HORACE! NOW I'LL HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO THEIR TRIBAL CHIEF!

NONSENSE, UNCLE! NO ONE SAW ME SPEAR THE BLASTED PIG!



THE MEERUT BOWED AND LEFT THE DINING-ROOM...

YOU STUPID FOOL! THAT SERVANT IS A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL TRIBE! HE'LL REPORT IT!

I'M SORRY, UNCLE! I DIDN'T KNOW...



THE GOVERNOR GLARED AT HIS NEPHEW...

FROM NOW ON, UNTIL I CAN SNEAK YOU OUT OF THIS PROVINCE, YOUR LIFE ISN'T WORTH TWO SHILLINGS! YOU'LL STAY WITHIN THE GARRISON WALLS! UNDERSTAND?

I UNDERSTAND, UNCLE!



THE NEXT DAY...

WELL, I SAW THE CHIEF OF THE MEERUTS TODAY AND MADE A FORMAL APOLOGY! I TOLD HIM YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT THEY HELD THE BOAR IN SUCH HIGH REGARD! I'VE ASSURED HIM IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN! YOU'RE LEAVING HERE TOMORROW!

YES, UNCLE!



AFTER GOVERNOR STURDY LEFT HIS NEPHEW'S ROOM...

DID YOU HEAR THAT, SIMIA? WE'RE GETTING KICKED OUT TOMORROW!

I HEAR, SAHIB!



WELL, I'M NOT LEAVING TILL I GET ME A BOAR'S HEAD TO BRING BACK WITH ME TO KADIR!

NO, SAHIB! THAT IS NOT WISE! LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE!





NONSENSE, SIMIA! NO, SAHIB! I NOT GO WITH YOU! UNCLE WILL NEVER KNOW! AND WHAT IF THE MEERUTS FIND OUT? WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY BY THEN! UNCLE WILL HAVE THE TROUBLE! NOT US!



I'M ORDERING YOU TO GO WITH ME!

NO! NO! I TELL YOUR UNCLE!



ALL RIGHT, I'LL GO MYSELF! TOMORROW... AT DAWN! BUT, SO HELP ME, SIMIA... IF MY UNCLE FINDS OUT... IF YOU BREATHE A WORD... I'LL CUT YOUR TONGUE OUT!

Y-YES, SAHIB!

THE NEXT DAY, BEFORE SUNRISE, LIEUTENANT HORACE STURDY, ROYAL BENGAL LANGERS, RODE OUT INTO THE BOAR COUNTRY WITH HIS SPEAR...



ALL RIGHT, YOU LITTLE DEVILS! JUST ONE OF YOU... SHOW YOUR UGLY SHOUT...

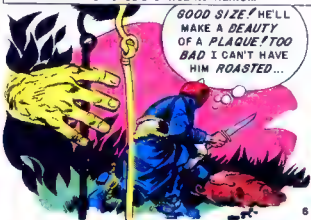
HORACE SPOTTED A BOAR SOON AFTER HE LOWERED HIS SPEAR AND KICKED HIS HORSE! THE WILD PIG SNORTED...



IT WHEELED SHARPLY... STARTING TO RUN ON ITS SHORT LITTLE LEGS! HORACE WAS OVER IT... HIS LANCE POISED...



THEN THE SPEAR RAMMED HOME! THE WILD BOAR SQUEELED, ROLLING OVER AND OVER! LIEUTENANT STURDY DISMOUNTED AND KNELT TO SEVER ITS HEAD! HE NEVER NOTICED THE BROWN, MUSCULAR HAND SEIZE HIS HORSE'S DANGLING REINS...



GOOD SIZE! HE'LL MAKE A BEAUTY OF A PLAQUE! TOO BAD I CAN'T HAVE HIM ROASTED...

THE WHINNY OF HIS HORSE MADE HORACE LOOK UP! A MEERUT TRIBESMAN SAT ASTRIDE THE STEED! A ROUGHLY HEWN LANCE HUNG IN THE NATIVE'S HAND...



WHAT THE...?
I SAY! GET
OFF MY...

RUN...
INFIDEL!

THE MEERUT POINTED OFF TOWARD THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING...

RUN! RUN OR
I SPEAR YOU
WHERE YOU
STAND!

W-W-WAIT!
I...I...



THE LANCE WAS RAISED! LIEUTENANT STURDY BACKED AWAY FROM ITS RAZOR-SHARP POINT! THEN HE TURNED...AND RAN...



HELP!
HELP!

HE HAD ALMOST REACHED THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING WHEN HE HEARD THE HORSE'S HOOVES BEHIND HIM



NO! NO!

HORACE TURNED TO SEE THE MEERUT CHARGING DOWN UPON HIM, THE LANCE POISED...



YAAAAAAAAAAAAA... GKK!

HIS SCREAM WAS CUT SHORT AS THE SPEAR WAS RAMMED HOME...



THAT NIGHT, LIEUTENANT STURDY'S WORRIED UNCLE ENTERED THE GARRISON DINING-ROOM WITH LITTLE APPETITE! EVEN THAT SOON VANISHED WHEN HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE FIGURE ON THE TABLE! IT LAY IN A CROUCHED POSITION ON A HUGE PLANK! ITS HAIR HAD BEEN BOILED OFF, AND ITS FLESH BROWNED TO A CRISP! IN ITS MOUTH, WAS A JUICY RED APPLE...



GOOD LORD!
HORACE!

HEH, HEH! SO IF YOU KNOW ANY BORES, KIDDIES, TAKE A LESSON FROM THE MEERUT! YEP! THAT'S MY STORY! POOR HORACE WAS ROASTED... THROUGH AND THROUGH! THERE HASN'T BEEN MUCH BOAR-HUNTING IN MEERUT SINCE THEN, THOUGH! SEEMS THAT NOBODY WANTS TO END UP ON A GRAVY-STAINED PLANK! AS THE MEERUT CHIEF PUTS IT, "AN APPLE A DAY KEEPS THE HUNTERS AWAY!" AIN'T IT THE FRUIT? 'BYE NOW! WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG. TALES FROM THE CRYPT!



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! CAN'T *RESIST* ME, EH? LOVE MY *COOKING*, EH? WELL, COME ON INTO *THE HAUNT OF FEAR* AGAIN, AND I'LL WHIP UP ANOTHER *MAD-MAG-RECIPE* IN MY *CAULDRON*! YEP! IT'S THE *OLD WITCH*, YOUR *REEKING RESTAURATEUR* OF THE *REVOLTING*... YOUR *MACABRE MENU-MAKER*... YOUR *SHIVER-CHEF*... *GREEPS-COOKER*... *MADNESS-MIXER*... *SCREAM-STEWER*... AND SO FORTH! SO FASTEN YOUR *DROOL CUPS* FOR ANOTHER SERVING OF *SHEER HORROR*, AND I'LL BEGIN THE *TASTY TALE* I CALL...

CHATTER-BOXED!



IT WAS A BRISK DAY IN NOVEMBER, 1941! THE MAN LAY SPRAWLED ON THE COLD SIDEWALK WHERE HE HAD FALLEN! HIS FACE WAS ASHEN-WHITE... HIS LIPS BLUE! THE CROWD AROUND HIM FORMED QUICKLY... ANXIOUS EYES PEERED DOWN AT HIM...

WHAT HAPPENED?

HE JUST KEELED OVER!

SOMEBODY GET AN AMBULANCE!

HE HE LOOKS DEAD!



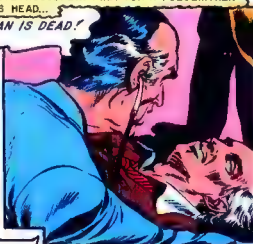
SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, AN AMBULANCE, ITS SIREN SCREAMING, PULLED UP TO THE CURB BESIDE THE PROSTRATE FIGURE...

ONE SIDE! LET ME THROUGH!

ALL RIGHT! BACK UP! GIVE HIM AIR!

THE WHITE-COATED AMBULANCE DOCTOR KNELT OVER THE MAN LYING ON THE GRAY SIDEWALK! HE LISTENED WITH HIS STETHOSCOPE... FELT FOR A PULSE... THEN SHOOK HIS HEAD...

THIS MAN IS DEAD!



IT WAS AN HOUR LATER THAT EILEEN FILBURT FINALLY SAID GOOD-BYE TO HER FRIEND SADIE! THEY'D BEEN AT IT, TALKING, FOR EVEN LONGER THAN THAT! AS SOON AS SHE HUNG UP...

HUH? OH, DEAR! ANOTHER CALL! AND I HAVE SO MUCH TO DO!



YES! THIS IS MRS. FILBURT! WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU FOR AN HOUR, MRS. FILBURT! YOUR LINE WAS BUSY!



OH! I WAS CHATTING WITH A GIRL FRIEND! WHO IS THIS?

THIS IS THE MORGUE CALLING, MRS. FILBURT! YOU'D BETTER BRACE YOURSELF! THEY BROUGHT YOUR HUSBAND'S BODY IN HERE A WHILE AGO! HE'S... DEAD!



A HUSH FELL OVER THE PEOPLE SEATED IN THE FUNERAL PARLOR'S CHAPEL! THE COFFIN LID WAS OPENED! THE VOICE OF THE ORATOR BEGAN TO DRONE! JACOB FILBURT'S FUNERAL SERVICES HAD BEGUN...

AND SO, IN FINAL PEACE... JACOB FILBURT'S REMAINS WILL BE LAID TO REST! BUT HE LEAVES BEHIND THE LOVE... THE DEVOTION... THE KINDNESS HE PRACTICED WHILE HE LIVED...



THE FUNERAL ORATOR'S VOICE DRONED ON AND ON, INTERRUPTED ONLY BY THE PITIFUL SOBS OF THE MOURNERS BEFORE HIM! SUDDENLY, A SHRIEK ECHOED THROUGH THE FUNERAL CHAPEL...

EEEEAAA!



SHEER HORROR GRIPPED THE MOURNING GATHERING! ALL EYES STARED AT THE OPEN COFFIN! A WHITE VEINED HAND REACHED UP, GRASPING THE COFFIN LID...

AND AS JACOB FILBURT SAT UP, THE CHAPEL WAS FILLED WITH CRIES OF TERROR! WOMEN MOURNERS, TRIPPING ON THEIR BLACK DRESSES, SCRAMBLED FOR THE EXITS! MEN PUSHED AFTER THEM! A GIRL FELL, SCREAMING, AND THE OTHERS TRAMPLED OVER HER...

YAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGHHH!

SOME, ROOTED WITH MORTAL FEAR TO THE SPOT WHERE THEY STOOD, JUST STARED AT THE PALE FIGURE RISING IN HIS COFFIN! SUDDENLY, JACOB'S EYES BLINKED OPEN! COLOR RUSHED TO HIS CHEEKS! HE LOOKED AROUND...

THE DOCTOR STROKED HIS CHIN THOUGHTFULLY! JACOB FILBURT HUNG HIS HEAD...

WHA... WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

GOOD LORD!

HE'S ALIVE!

YOU SUFFERED WHAT IS COMMONLY CALLED A CATALEPTIC FIT, MR. FILBURT! CATALEPTIC FITS CLOSELY RESEMBLE DEATH!

BUT DOCTOR! I MIGHT HAVE BEEN BURIED ALIVE!

DOCTOR! TELEPHONE! MRS. CONDIRIAK!

JACOB FILBURT'S FAMILY PHYSICIAN, DOCTOR MENLEY BENDINERE, PICKED UP THE PHONE...

TEN MINUTES LATER...

GOOD-BYE, MRS. CONDIRIAK! ER... I WAS SAYING, I COULD'VE BEEN WHERE WERE BURIED ALIVE! WE, FILBURT?

EXCUSE ME, FILBURT! OH, YES, MRS. CONDIRIAK! IS THAT SO? IS THAT SO? NO?! HMMM! OH, DEAR! REALLY! WELL, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU SHOULD DO! TAKE A POT AND BOIL UP...

YES! NO TELLING HOW LONG A CATALEPTIC FIT WILL LAST! AND IT IS RARE THAT A PHYSICIAN CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IT... AND ACTUAL DEATH! NOW...

TELEPHONE, DOCTOR! MRS. REREFUS!

OH, EXCUSE ME, FILBURT!

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...

YES, MRS. REREFFUS!
YOU DO THAT! YES!
GOOD-BYE! ER...

IS IT
POSSIBLE
THAT I MAY
HAVE MORE OF
THESE ATTACKS,
DOCTOR?



QUITE POSSIBLE, MR. FILBURT! WE MUST BE VERY CAREFUL TO SEE THAT WE AVOID WHAT ALMOST HAPPENED YESTERDAY! WE MUST...



TELEPHONE, DOCTOR!
MRS. CHEVK!

OH! EXCUSE ME... ER...
MR. FILBURT!

GOOD-BYE, DOCTOR!



JACOB FILBURT WAS FRIGHTENED... TERRIBLY FRIGHTENED! HE RUSHED TO HIS BROTHER'S HOUSE.

NOT HOME! HMMPH! HE'S NEVER HOME! ALWAYS OUT, GALLIVANTING! JUST WHEN I NEED HIM!



AS JACOB CAME IN THE FRONT DOOR OF HIS OWN HOME... NO, SADIE! REALLY? HMMPH! ALWAYS YOU'RE KIDDING! SHE DID? OH, WAIT UNTIL MARY HEARS ABOUT THIS! GO ON! TELL ME MORE!



SUDDENLY JACOB FILBURT'S FACE BRIGHTENED! HE GRINNED... OF COURSE! THAT'S IT! THAT'S THE WAY TO MAKE SURE I'M NOT BURIED ALIVE!



SADIE! SERIOUSLY?? OH, NO! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE! WELL, I'LL BE...

MR. FILBURT HURRIED TO THE UNDERTAKER! THE PLAN WAS FORMING IN HIS MIND... THE SOLUTION...

SO YOU SEE, IF I DO HAVE A CATALEPTIC FIT, AND YOU DO BURY ME ALIVE... I'LL BE ABLE TO LET MY FAMILY KNOW! THEY'LL COME AND DIG ME UP!

ALL RIGHT, MR. FILBURT! WE'LL FOLLOW YOUR INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LETTER...



THEN MR. FILBURT WENT TO HIS FAMILY DOCTOR AND TOLD HIM HIS PLAN...

EXCELLENT IDEA, FILBURT! IF YOU ARE BURIED ALIVE DURING YOUR CATALEPTIC FIT, YOU'LL CONSUME PRACTICALLY NONE OF THE AIR IN THE COFFIN! WHEN YOU COME OUT OF IT, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LAST LONG ENOUGH...



TELEPHONE, DOCTOR!
ER, THANKS, DOC!
'BYE!

FINALLY, MR. FILBURT COMPLETED HIS ARRANGEMENTS...

I'LL PAY MY BILLS IN ADVANCE... EVERY MONTH! SATISFACTORY?



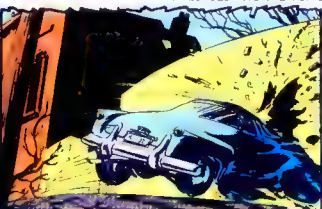
FINE! WE'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING, SIR! WOULD YOU LIKE TO PAY FOR DECEMBER NOW?

JACOB WENT OUT INTO THE CHILL NOVEMBER AIR FEELING CONFIDENT THAT HIS PROBLEM WAS SOLVED...

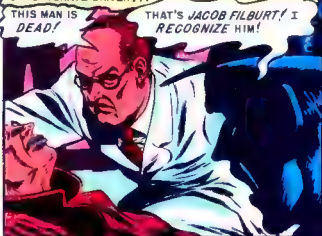


YES, SIREE! PERFECT! PERFECT!

EARLY TWO NEXT MONTH, IT HAPPENED! A CAR CAREENED CRAZILY ACROSS A DESERTED STREET AND SMASHED INTO A BRICK WALL! THE IMPACT OF TONS OF STEEL AND SHATTERING GLASS ECHOED INTO THE NIGHT.



WHEN THE AMBULANCE DOCTOR EXAMINED THE UNFORTUNATE DRIVER...



THIS MAN IS DEAD!

THAT'S JACOB FILBURT! I RECOGNIZE HIM!

DOCTOR BENDINERE ASSURED MRS. FILBURT...

NO, MRS. FILBURT! HE'S DEAD ALL RIGHT! THE CRASH DID IT! IT'S DEFINITELY NOT A CATALEPTIC FIT!



THEN... SOB... I SUPPOSE WE... SOB... MIGHT AS WELL GO AHEAD... SOB... WITH THE FUNERAL!

THE UNDERTAKER, HOWEVER, INSISTED THAT HE FOLLOW MR. FILBURT'S INSTRUCTIONS...

THAT'S THE ARRANGEMENT, MRS. FILBURT! YOUR HUSBAND DEMANDED IT! I'M GOING TO SEE THAT IT'S CARRIED OUT! NO EMBALMING!



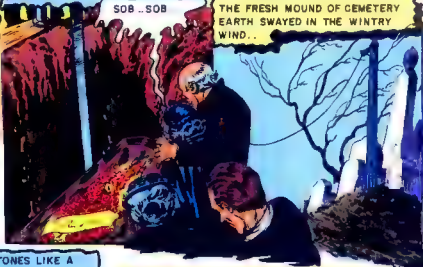
BUT, REALLY, MR. BOXER! THE OTHER THING! ISN'T THAT A LITTLE RIDICULOUS? BURY JACOB WITH A CONNECTED TELEPHONE?

HEE, HEE! YEP, KIDDIES! THAT'S THE DEAL! THAT'S WHAT POOR OLD JACOB FILBURT ARRANGED WITH THE UNDERTAKER AND THE TELEPHONE COMPANY... THAT HE BE BURIED *WITHOUT* BEING EMBALMED, ALONG WITH A *CONNECTED TELEPHONE* IN HIS *COFFIN*! NOW, NOW! LET'S NOT START *GUESSING* HOW MY LITTLE TALE ENDS! C'MON! LET'S READ ON...



AND SO ON THAT GOLD SATURDAY IN EARLY DECEMBER, JACOB FILBURT'S COFFIN WAS LOWERED INTO THE GRAVE...

SOB...SOB



SILENCE CLOSED IN AS THE MOURNERS LEFT AND THE GRAVE WAS COVERED OVER! THE THIN TELEPHONE WIRE COMING FROM THE FRESH MOUND OF CEMETERY EARTH SWAYED IN THE WINTRY WIND...

NIGHT CREPT OVER THE GRAY HEADSTONES LIKE A BLACK PHANTOM! ALL WAS STILL... EXCEPT FOR THE WHINE OF THE WIND STREAMING PAST THE WIRE! THEN CAME DAWN! TOWARDS AFTERNOON...



YAAAAA AAAAAAAH!

FOR JACOB FILBURT *HAD* HAD A CATALEPTIC FIT! HE'D SUFFERED IT WHILE DRIVING! THAT'S WHY HE CRASHED! BUT THE CRASH HADN'T KILLED HIM! HE WAS ALIVE... BURIED ALIVE...

HELP! HELP ME... SOMEONE!



AND THEN JACOB FELT IT, BESIDE HIM! THE COLD BLACK INSTRUMENT! THE *TELEPHONE*...

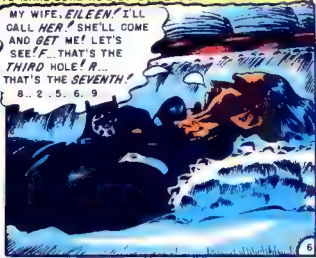
OH THANK HEAVENS! THANK HEAVENS THEY REMEMBERED!



JACOB LIFTED THE RECEIVER! THE DIAL TONE BEGAN TO HUM! HE COUNTED THE LITTLE HOLES CAREFULLY... TO MAKE SURE HE'D DIAL THE RIGHT NUMBER...

MY WIFE, EILEEN! I'LL CALL HER! SHE'LL COME AND GET ME! LET'S SEE! F... THAT'S THE THIRD HOLE! R... THAT'S THE SEVENTH!

8... 2... 5... 6... 9



YOU THINK YOU'RE GLEVER! DON'T YOU? OKAY! SO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN! YEP! EILEEN RIGHT AT THAT MOMENT... WAS ON THE PHONE... TALKING TO SADIE...



NO, SADIE! REALLY? DIDN'T CRY AT ALL! OF ALL THE NERVE! AND I THOUGHT SHE WAS MY FRIEND! WHAT GALL! HMMPH! WELL, I'LL TELL HER...



SO NATURALLY...

BUZZ-BUZZ... BUZZ-BUZZ... BUZZ-BUZZ... BUZZ-BUZZ...



BUSY! SHE'S PROBABLY TALKING! THIS CAN GO ON FOR HOURS! I'LL CALL MY BROTHER!

HEE, HEE! MY, YOU'RE SO SMART! JACOB'S BROTHER WAS NEVER HOME! YOU REMEMBERED...



B-R-R-R-R-R-R! B-R-R-R-R-R-R!

NO ANSWER! GASP! HE'S NEVER... GASP. HOME WHEN... GASP. I NEED HIM! I KNOW! GASP! DOCTOR BENDINERE!



OKAY! OKAY! SO PIN A WOODEN MEDAL WITH LEATHER TRIMMINGS ON YOUR NOSE! SO YOU FIGURED THIS OUT, TOO! YEP! THE DOG WAS ON THE PHONE CONSOLING ONE OF HIS COMPLAINING PATIENTS...

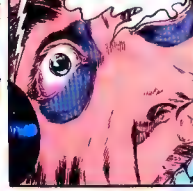


IS THAT SO, MRS. GONDRIAK? HURTS THAT MUCH? OH, DEAR! YOU POOR THING! OF COURSE! NOW, HERE'S WHAT YOU DO! GOT A PAD AND PENCIL? GOOD! TAKE THIS DOWN...



BUZZ-BUZZ BUZZ-BUZZ BUZZ-BUZZ

BUSY! I SHOULD... GASP. CHOKO... HAVE... KNOWN! WHAT'LL I DO? YES! THAT'S IT... THAT'S IT...



SO, SMART-ALEGS? GOT IT FIGURED OUT? WHAT'S GONNA STYMIE HIM, NOW? AFTER ALL... JACOB CAN ALWAYS DIAL THE OPERATOR! HEE, HEE! YOU NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT, DID YOU? WELL, JACOB DID! IN FACT, HE'S WAITING FOR THE DIAL TONE RIGHT NOW.



BUT THE DIAL TONE DIDN'T COME! BECAUSE MINUTES BEFORE...THOUSANDS OF MILES WESTWARD...

LOOK 'UP THERE!

PLANES! HUNDREDS OF THEM!

GOOD LORD!



DEAD...GASP! NO DIAL TONE! THE PHONE IS DEAD!

OPERATOR...GASP... OPERATOR... CHOKES...

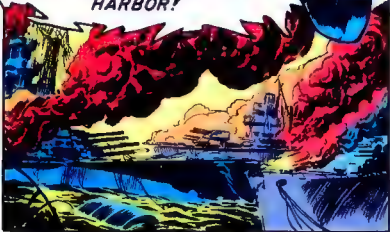


NO, FIENDS! THE DIAL TONE *DIDN'T* COME! BECAUSE AT THAT MOMENT, THE NATION'S PHONE CENTERS WERE TIED UP WITH ARMY, NAVY, AND NEWSPAPER CALLS! THE WIRES WERE JAMMED! *ALL CIRCUITS WERE BUSY...*

PLEASE...GASP...CHOKES! NOT MUCH AIR...LEFT! OPERATOR! GASP...A DIAL TONE...SO I CAN... PLEASE...GASP...CHOKES...GASP...DIAL THE OPERATOR...GURGLE...



'PLEASE HANG UP!' THE JAPANESE HAVE JUST BOMBED PEARL HARBOR!



IN FACT, THE AIR IN JACOB'S COFFIN GAVE OUT LONG BEFORE THE LITTLE ORANGE LIGHT ON THE 'TROUBLE-SWITCHBOARD' INDICATED THAT A PHONE WAS OFF THE HOOK SOMEWHERE! SO THE SHRILL VOICE OF THE OPERATOR FELL ON DEAF EARS IN THAT DARK UNDERGROUND HORIZONTAL PHONE BOOTH...FOR JACOB HAD SUFFOCATED...

THIS IS THE OPERATOR! I'M SORRY! OUR CIRCUITS ARE BUSY! PLEASE HANG UP...



HEE, HEE! YEP, KIDDIES! LIKE I SAID IN THE *BEGINNING*... IT WAS 1941! I THOUGHT YOU WERE PRETTY *SHREWD*, EH? THOUGHT YOU HAD IT *ALL FIGURED OUT*? WELL, I HOPE I OUT-SMARTED YOU! AS FOR JACOB...WELL... HE AND HIS TELEPHONE ARE PRETTY DECAYED BY NOW! I STILL GET A CALL FROM HIM ONCE IN A WHILE, THOUGH!

USUALLY, I'M NOT HOME...SO HE LEAVES A *SPIRT-MESSAGE*! AND NOW, THE *VAULT-KEEPER* AWAITS, WITH HIS LITTLE NUMBER! *DIG* YOU LATER! GOT ANOTHER *GRIM FAIRY TALE* FOR YOU! 'BYE, NOW!



THE VAULT OF HORROR!

REMEMBER THE STORY ABOUT THE **THREE HOLES IN THE GROUND** CALLED 'WELL, WELL, WELL'? HEH, HEH! NOW, YOUR **VAULT-KEEPER** BELIEVES IN **DEFLATION!** SO COME INTO THE **VAULT OF HORROR**, SIT YOURSELF DOWN ON THAT **BUCKET**, AND I'LL BEGIN THE TALE OF **ONE HOLE IN THE GROUND** CALLED...

all Washed Up!

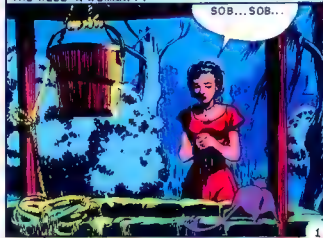


GEORGE EVANS



IT WAS AN **OLD WELL!** NO ONE USED IT ANYMORE! THE WATER DEEP BELOW ITS SLIMY-WALLED SIDES SHIMMERED IN THE MOONLIGHT! A MUSTY ODOR OF STAGNATION AND STALENESS DRIFTED UP FROM THE BLACKNESS BENEATH ITS STONE RIM! THE MOSS-LADEN WATER BUCKET HUNG SILENTLY ON THE FRAYED ROPE COILED ABOUT THE WEATHERBEATEN HANDLE! INSECTS SWARMED BENEATH THE ROTTEN SHED THAT STOOD OVER IT! A TWIG SNAPPED NEARBY! A FIGURE MOVED OUT OF THE DARKNESS...TOWARD THE WELL! A WOMAN...

SOB... SOB...



SHE CAME DOWN TO THE WELL AND LEANED OVER IT! THE MOONLIGHT GLISTENED ON HER TEAR-STAINED CHEEKS! SHE LOOKED DOWN AT THE STAGNANT WATER FAR BELOW...

HOW LONG CAN WE GO ON LIKE THIS, HARRY? PEOPLE ARE TALKING! THEY SAY... SOB... THEY SAY YOU DON'T INTEND TO MARRY ME!



A SECOND FIGURE CAME OUT OF THE SHADOWS AND MOVED TO THE SIDE OF THE UNHAPPY WOMAN! A MAN...

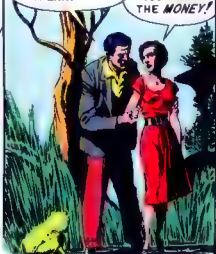
THEY'RE WRONG, MARCIA! I WANT TO MARRY YOU! BUT I CAN'T! NOT YET! I'M NOT READY!

WHEN, HARRY? WHEN WILL YOU BE READY?



AS SOON AS I'VE SAVED UP ENOUGH MONEY! I'VE GOT A JOB NOW! IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I GET A PROMOTION! THEN...

YOU'VE PUT IT OFF AND PUT IT OFF! ALWAYS THE SAME EXCUSE! YOU HAVEN'T THE MONEY!



IT ISN'T AN EXCUSE, MARCIA! CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

I UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING, HARRY! PERFECTLY! I'M SORRY YOU NEVER GAVE ME A RING! I WOULD GIVE IT BACK... NOW!



MARCIA!

WE'RE FINISHED, HARRY! I'M TIRED OF WAITING! GREGG CALLED ME TODAY! HE'S BACK IN TOWN! HE WANTS TO SEE ME! HE WANTS TO KNOW IF I'M... FREE... OF TIES! I'M GOING TO TELL HIM... YES!



MARCIA! COME BACK! WAIT!

GOOD-BYE, HARRY! I'LL SEE YOU AROUND



THE WOMAN DISAPPEARED INTO THE GLOOM! THE MAN STOOD... STARING INTO THE BLACKNESS WHERE SHE'D VANISHED! THE SILENCE CLOSED IN AGAIN! A BREEZE STIRRED THE WELL BUCKET! THE FRAYED ROPE CREAKED...

GREGG SANDERS! THAT RICH NO-GOOD ***! HE ALWAYS WANTED MARCIA! NOW HE'S GOING TO TAKE HER AWAY FROM ME!



MARCIA'S LAUGHTER RIPPLED THROUGH THE STILL NIGHT AIR! GREGG TOOK HER IN HIS ARMS...



GREGG! THESE LAST FEW WEEKS HAVE BEEN **WONDERFUL!** **JUST WONDERFUL!** I'VE LOVED **EVERY MINUTE** OF IT!

IT DOESN'T **HAVE** TO END, MARCIA! IT COULD GO **ON** AND **ON...** LIKE THIS... IF YOU'LL SAY **'YES!'**

MARCIA TURNED AWAY, STARING DOWN AT THE SHIMMERING WELL-WATER FAR BELOW...



ARE... ARE YOU **PROPOSING** TO ME, GREGG?

YES, MARCIA! I'M ASKING YOU TO **MARRY ME!** WHAT DO YOU SAY?



I'M NOT SURE I **LOVE** YOU, GREGG!

I'LL **MAKE** YOU LOVE ME, DEAREST! JUST GIVE ME THE **CHANCE!** SAY YOU'LL **MARRY ME!**



YES, GREGG! I'LL **I'LL MARRY YOU!**

SWEET-HEART!



HARRY GLENCHED HIS FISTS AND SWORE SILENTLY AS HE WATCHED FROM HIS HIDING PLACE...

I WON'T LET YOU **HAVE** HER, GREGG! I **WON'T!** SHE'S **MINE!** **MINE!**

MARCIA PULLED AWAY FROM GREGG! SHE SMILED...



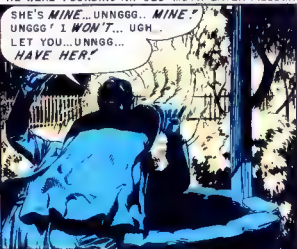
I'VE GOT TO GO IN NOW, GREGG! IT'S LATE! CALL ME TOMORROW!

I WILL, HONEY! GOOD-NIGHT!

AFTER MARCIA WENT OFF DOWN THE PATH TOWARD HER HOUSE, GREGG LEANED OVER THE WELL AND GRINNED! HE WAS TOO BUSY WITH HIS OWN THOUGHTS TO HEAR THE CRACKLE OF THE LEAVES BEHIND HIM...



HARRY BROUGHT THE ROCK DOWN ON GREGG'S HEAD AGAIN AND AGAIN! SOON IT FELT AS IF HE WERE POUNDING AN OLD MOTH-EATEN PILLOW.



SHE'S MINE... UNNGGG... MINE!
UNGGG! I WON'T... UGH...
LET YOU... UNNGG...
HAVE HER!

HARRY KNELT AND SLIPPED THE RING FROM GREGG'S FINGER...



I COULD *HOCK* IT! IT'D
BE ENOUGH TO GET
MARRIED ON!

THERE WAS A SECOND OR TWO OF SILENCE, AND THEN A MUFFLED SPLASH FAR BELOW! HARRY PEERED DOWN AT THE RIPPLING MURKY WATER! SUDDENLY...



GAASP...

HARRY STARED DOWN AT GREGG'S LIFELESS BODY LYING BEFORE HIM! THEN, SOMETHING CAUGHT HIS EYE! SOMETHING *SPARKLING*...



HIS *DIAMOND RING*! IT... IT MUST
BE WORTH A FORTUNE...

HARRY PUSHED THE RING INTO HIS BREAST POCKET AND LIFTED GREGG'S BODY...

NOW TO GET RID OF YOU, GREGG...
WHERE THEY'D NEVER THINK
OF LOOKING FOR YOU...



HARRY PUSHED GREGG'S BODY OVER THE STONE RIM OF THE WELL! FOR A MOMENT, IT HUNG THERE... PRECARIOUSLY...



DOWN... YOU GO...

THE RING SPIRALED DOWNWARD CRAZILY! HARRY LUNGED FOR IT, ALMOST GOING OVER! IT WAS TOO LATE



BLAST IT!
ANK...

A LIGHT BLENDED IN IN MACIA'S HOUSE! A WINDOW RATTLED OPEN! HARRY DUCKED INTO THE SHADOWS



SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, HARRY SLOWED DOWN TO A WALK, BREATHING HEAVILY! HE'D GOTTEN OUT OF THERE **FAST..**



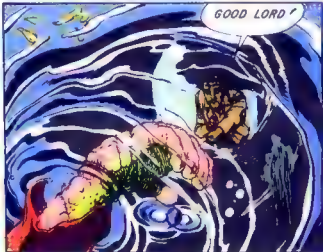
A WEEK PASSED! EACH NIGHT, UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS, HARRY WOULD RETURN TO THE WELL WITH SOME STRING AND FISH HOOKS! HOUR AFTER HOUR, HE'D DANGLE THE HOOKS INTO THE MURKY WATER..



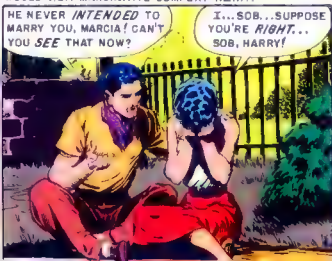
SEVERAL TIMES DURING THOSE NIGHTS OF PROBING, THE HOOKS WOULD CATCH ONTO THE BODY BELOW, AND HARRY WOULD BE FORCED TO SNAP THE STRING AND BEGIN AGAIN



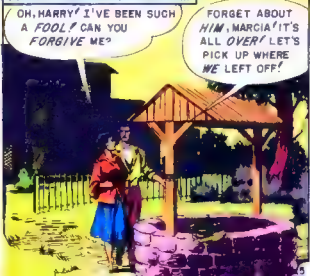
ONCE, HARRY'D PULLED HARD, AND A BLOATED WHITENED HAND LIFTED UPWARD FROM THE MUDDY SURFACE



DURING THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED THE MURDER, HARRY WOULD VISIT MARCIA...TO COMFORT HER...



AND AS THE WEEKS WENT BY...



MEANWHILE, HARRY CONTINUED TO FISH FOR GREGG'S RING WITH NO SUCCESS...

IT'S NO *USE!* THERE'S JUST *ONE ALTERNATIVE...*



AND SO, ABOUT TWO MONTHS AFTER THE MURDER... ONE DARK NIGHT.. HARRY CAME TO THE WELL WITH A COIL OF STRONG ROPE...

IT'S THE *ONLY WAY!* I'VE GOT TO GO *DOWN* THERE AND *GET IT!*



HARRY SLID THE ROPE AROUND ONE OF THE BEAMS THAT SUPPORTED THE WELL SHED AND TIED IT SECURELY.



THEN HE SLIPPED OVER THE STONE RIM OF THE WELL AND BEGAN TO LOWER HIMSELF, HAND UNDER HAND, DOWN INTO THE DARK MUSTY SHAFT...

PHEW! WHAT A SMELL!



THE STENCH OF THE STAGNANT WATER BELOW SEARED HARRY'S NOSTRILS! SOON HE REACHED ITS MURKY SURFACE

I HOPE IT'S NOT TOO DEEP!



THE WATER ROSE SLOWLY! IT HAD REACHED HARRY'S CHEST WHEN HIS FEET TOUCHED SOMETHING SOFT...

I...I'M STANDING ON THE...*BODY!*



HARRY TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND DUCKED BELOW THE SURFACE! HE REACHED DOWNWARD FOR THE RING...

IT *MUST* BE HERE... *SOMEWHERE...*



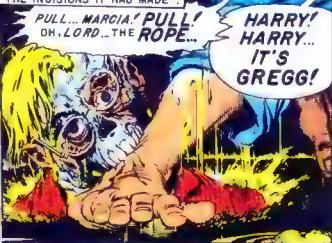
MARCIA SAT BOLT UPRIGHT IN HER BED AS THE HYSTERICAL SHRIEKING ECHOED THROUGH THE STILLNESS OF THE NIGHT



THE SPLASHING AND SCREAMING WERE INDEED COMING FROM THE WELL! MARCIA PEERED OVER THE EDGE! FAR BELOW, HARRY WAS TRYING TO PULL HIMSELF UPWARD...



THE ROTTED, BLOATED, WHITENED, GRINNING THING HAD CLOSED ITS TEETH AROUND HARRY'S ANKLE! IT HELD IT IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP! TRICKLES OF BLOOD RAN FROM THE INCISIONS IT HAD MADE...



SHE SLIPPED ON A ROBE, HURRIED DOWNSTAIRS AND OUT INTO THE DARKNESS



MARCIA BEGAN TO PULL WITH ALL HER STRENGTH! HARRY CONTINUED TO SHRIEK! LITTLE BY LITTLE HE CAME OUT OF THE WATER! AND THEN SHE SAW IT...



AND AS THE ROPE SNAPPED UNDER THE STRAIN, THE TWO OF THEM DISAPPEARED INTO THE DARK MURKY WATER! MARCIA STARED IN HORROR AS THE LAST FEW BUBBLES ROSE... AND BROKE ACROSS THE STAGNANT SURFACE...



HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S MY LITTLE YARN FOR THIS TIME, KIDDIES! HARRY AND GREGG ENDED UP IN THE DRINK... TOGETHER! WELL-WATER YUH GONNA DO° AS FOR MARCIA... SHE WAS LEFT HIGH AND DRY! BY THE WAY... BEFORE YOU GO ON TO THE OLD WITCH'S NICHE, LET ME OFFER YOU A COOL, REFRESHING, THIRST-QUENCHER!



THE OLD WITCH'S GRIM FAIRY TALE!



HEE, HEE! IN VAULT OF HORROR NO. 27, I TOLD YOU **BLOOD-THIRSTY LITTLE FIENDS** A STORY I CALLED, '**A GRIM FAIRY TALE!**' MY IDIOT EDITORS WENT SO **WILD** OVER THAT ONE (THEY'RE BOTH IN **CAGES**, NOW!), I'VE DECIDED TO TELL YOU **ANOTHER!** I CALL THIS LITTLE **CHILDISH CHILLER...**

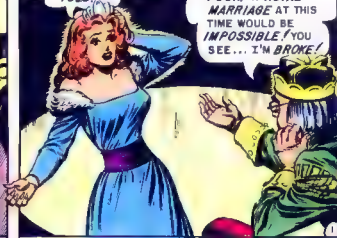
MARRIAGE VOWS!

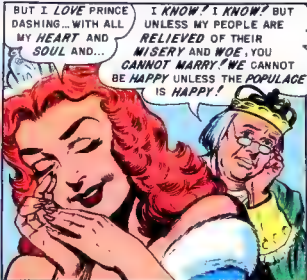
ONCE UPON A TIME... LONG, LONG AGO... THERE LIVED IN A TINY KINGDOM A **KIND-HEARTED KING** AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER... **PRINCESS BUTTERCUP!** NOW PRINCESS BUTTERCUP WAS **MADLY IN LOVE** WITH A HANDSOME **PRINCE** FROM A **DISTANT KINGDOM...** BUT WHEN SHE ASKED HER FATHER IF SHE COULD **MARRY** HIM, HER **KIND-HEARTED FATHER** REPLIED...



BUT **FATHER, DEAR!** I **LOVE** PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY **HEART** AND **SOUL...** AND **FINGERS...** AND **TOES!**

I **KNOW**, BUTTERCUP DEAR! BUT OUR PEOPLE ARE **STARVING!** OUR KINGDOM IS **POOR!** A **ROYAL MARRIAGE** AT THIS TIME WOULD BE **IMPOSSIBLE!** YOU SEE... I'M **BROKE!**





BUT I LOVE PRINCE DASHING... WITH ALL MY HEART AND SOUL AND...

I KNOW! I KNOW! BUT UNLESS MY PEOPLE ARE RELIEVED OF THEIR MISERY AND WOE, YOU CANNOT MARRY! WE CANNOT BE HAPPY UNLESS THE POPULACE IS HAPPY!

CAN YOU HIRE JESTERS TO GO AROUND AND MAKE THE PEOPLE HAPPY, FATHER? AFTER ALL, I DO LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY HEART AND...

I CAN'T, BUTTERCUP! THE ROYAL TREASURY IS EMPTY... CLEAN... BUSTED... FLAT...



CAN'T YOU BORROW MONEY, FATHER? I DO LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY... NEVER! THE ONLY ONE THAT I COULD BORROW MONEY FROM IS KING BLACKHEART... OUR BLACK-HEARTED NEIGHBOR...

UGH! HIM... I HATE!

YOU GET THE PICTURE, BUTTERCUP!



AND SO, BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS BUTTERCUP COULD NOT MARRY HANDSOME PRINCE DASHING! AT LEAST NOT UNTIL THE PEOPLE OF HER FATHER'S KINGDOM WERE BETTER OFF AND HAPPY! BUT THE LONGER SHE WAITED, THE WORSE THINGS GOT! THE PEOPLE GOT UNHAPPY AND UNHAPPY AND UNHAPPY. SOB

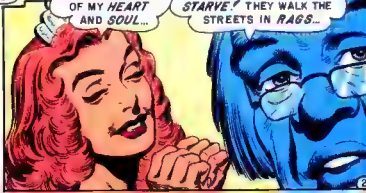


SOB... FATHER! WHAT WILL I DO? I HAVE WAITED... AND WAITED! THE PEOPLE HAVE GOTTEN UNHAPPY AND UNHAPPY! AND I DO LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL OF MY HEART AND SOUL... AND FINGERS AND TOES!

THIS IS NO LONGER A QUESTION OF YOUR HAPPINESS, MY CHILD! OUR KINGDOM IS IN A CRISIS! IT IS THE PEOPLE I AM THINKING ABOUT!

THE PEOPLE? BUT WHAT ABOUT POOR LITTLE ME... AND PRINCE DASHING... WHOM I LOVE WITH ALL OF MY HEART AND SOUL...

THE PEOPLE COME FIRST, MY CHILD! IT IS THEIR HAPPINESS YOU MUST BE CONCERNED ABOUT! AFTER THEY ARE HAPPY, THEN YOU CAN BE HAPPY! BUT NOW... THEY STARVE! THEY WALK THE STREETS IN RAGS...



FINALLY THE KIND-HEARTED KING COULD STAND IT NO LONGER! THINGS WERE WORSE THAN EVER! SO ONE DAY...

DAUGHTER, DEAR! I'VE DECIDED TO SWALLOW MY PRIDE! I'VE DECIDED TO ASK OUR BLACK-HEARTED NEIGHBOR, KING BLACKHEART, FOR A LOAN!

OH, DADDY! THEN MAYBE I CAN MARRY PRINCE DASHING, WHOM I LOVE WITH

YES, DAUGHTER! I'M ABLE TO BORROW ENOUGH, AND MY PEOPLE ARE HAPPY... THEN YOU COULD MARRY... ER WHAT'S HIS NAME?

PRINCE DASHING... WHOM I LOVE WITH ALL OF MY HEART AND SOUL AND...

SO... KIND-HEARTED KING KINDHEART AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, PRINCESS BUTTERCUP, RODE TO THE NEIGHBORING KINGDOM TO SEE BLACK-HEARTED KING BLACKHEART! NOW, KING BLACKHEART HAD NEVER MET PRINCESS BUTTERCUP! HE NEVER KNEW HIS NEIGHBOR HAD SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER! SO...

SO YOU NEED MONEY, EH, KING KINDHEART? WELL, I THINK A LOAN COULD BE ARRANGED!

YOU DO?

OH, DADDY!

...ON ONE CONDITION, OF COURSE!

EH? ONE CONDITION?

ANYTHING! ANYTHING!

MY CONDITION, KING KINDHEART, IS THAT YOU GIVE ME YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE!

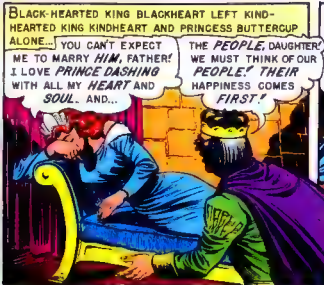
WHAT? BUT SHE LOVES ANOTHER!

NO! NO!

HEH, HEH! EITHER THAT...YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAND...OR NO LOAN.

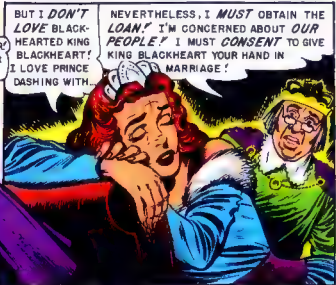
NEVER! NEVER!

CAN I SPEAK TO MY DAUGHTER FOR A MINUTE ALONE?



BLACK-HEARTED KING KINDHEART LEFT KIND-HEARTED KING KINDHEART AND PRINCESS BUTTERCUP ALONE... YOU CAN'T EXPECT ME TO MARRY HIM, FATHER! I LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY HEART AND SOUL. AND...

THE PEOPLE, DAUGHTER! WE MUST THINK OF OUR PEOPLE! THEIR HAPPINESS COMES FIRST!



BUT I DON'T LOVE BLACK-HEARTED KING BLACKHEART! I LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH...

NEVERTHELESS, I MUST OBTAIN THE LOAN! I'M CONCERNED ABOUT OUR PEOPLE! I MUST CONSENT TO GIVE KING BLACKHEART YOUR HAND IN MARRIAGE!

AND SO, WHEN KING BLACKHEART CAME BACK INTO THE ROOM...

ALL RIGHT, KING BLACKHEART! YOUR CONDITION WILL BE MET!

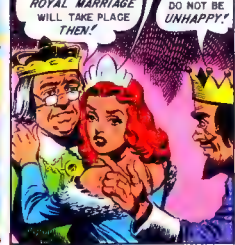
SOB... GOOD!
SOB... GOOD!

ER... WHEN WILL YOU WANT THE MARRIAGE TO TAKE PLACE?

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! NEXT MONTH!

YOU WILL COME TO THE CASTLE NEXT MONTH ON THIS DAY! THE ROYAL MARRIAGE WILL TAKE PLACE THEN!

SOB... GOOD!
SOB... NOW, NOW, PRETTY BUTTERCUP! DO NOT BE UNHAPPY!



I HATE YOU, KING BLACKHEART! I LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY... SOB... AND SOB

COME, DAUGHTER!

TILL NEXT MONTH, THEN!

SO, KIND-HEARTED KING KINDHEART AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, PRINCESS BUTTERCUP, RETURNED TO THEIR OWN KINGDOM...



SOB... SOB... YOU MUST BE BRAVE, BUTTERCUP! YOU MUST THINK OF OUR PEOPLE! REMEMBER! THEIR HAPPINESS COMES FIRST!

NEWS OF THE COMING ROYAL MARRIAGE WAS ANNOUNCED THROUGHOUT KIND-HEARTED KING KINDHEART'S KINGDOM...

HEAR YE...HEAR YE! BE IT KNOWN THAT ON **TUESDAY**, AUGUST FIFTH, **GOOD KING BLACKHEART** WILL TAKE OUR BELOVED **PRINCESS BUTTERCUP'S** HAND IN **MARRIAGE!**

BUT...

... BUT WE THOUGHT **PRINCESS BUTTERCUP** LOVED **PRINCE DASHING** WITH ALL HER **HEART AND SOUL... AND FINGERS... AND TOES!**

PLEASE! THERE'S **MORE!** **HEAR YE! HEAR YE!**

... AND BE IT KNOWN THAT ON **THAT DAY**, **EACH AND EVERY CITIZEN** WILL **RECEIVE A MEDIUM SIZED BAG OF GOLD... IN CELEBRATION!** GOLD, COURTESY OF LOAN BY KING **BLACKHEART!**

AH! **THAT'S THE CATCH!** **CRAFTY DEVIL, THAT KING BLACKHEART!**

DAYS PASSED! A WEEK WENT BY! **PRINCESS BUTTERCUP** REMAINED IN HER ROOM, CRYING HER EYES OUT...

SOB SOB!

COME, MY CHILD! SEE HOW **HAPPY OUR PEOPLE** ARE! SEE HOW **HAPPY YOU HAVE MADE THEM!**

SEE HOW **UNHAPPY I** AM, SOB... FATHER!

I KNOW, DAUGHTER! I KNOW! BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

THE WEDDING DATE DREW NEAR! THEN...ON THE EVE OF THE ROYAL MARRIAGE DAY...

I HAVE IT! I HAVE IT! A WAY OUT, FATHER!

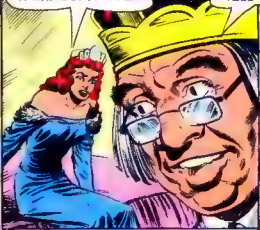
TELL ME DAUGHTER! TELL ME!

THE NEXT DAY...THE WEDDING DAY... STEEPLE BELLS TOLLED! PEOPLE DANCED IN THE STREETS! SOON, KING **BLACKHEART'S** COACH APPEARED...

HERE HE COMES!

ONE SIDE!

LOOK! BAGS OF GOLD!



THE BAGS OF GOLD WERE DISTRIBUTED TO THE POPULACE...

THERE! THE LAST ONE! NOW, LET'S GET ON WITH THE CEREMONY, KING KINDHEART!

FOLLOW ME, KING BLACKHEART!

KING KINGHEART LED KING BLACKHEART INTO THE CASTLE...

THIS WAY, KING BLACKHEART!

NO TRICKS, KING KINGHEART! I'VE KEPT MY PART OF THE BARGAIN!

...DOWN A LONG DARK CORRIDOR...

AND I WILL KEEP MY PART, KING BLACKHEART! A BARGAIN IS A BARGAIN! IN HERE...

AH! THE CHAPEL!

THE CHAPEL WAS FILLED WITH ROYAL GUESTS! NEAR THE ALTAR STOOD PRINCESS BUTTERCUP! AT HER SIDE STOOD PRINCE DASHING...

WHAT'S *THIS*, KING KINDHEART? I AM TO HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE ... *NOT HIM!*

THAT'S RIGHT, KING BLACKHEART! THERE'S TO BE A *DOUBLE CEREMONY* TODAY!

PRINCE DASHING WILL MARRY BUTTERCUP...

WHAT!? BUT...

KING KINDHEART EXTENDED A VELVET PILLOW! KING BLACKHEART STARED AT IT IN SHEER HORROR...

... AND YOU... YOU WILL HAVE MY DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE!

GOOD LORD!

HEE, HEE! YEP! THEY *MADE* THE OLD BOY, KING BLACKHEART, GO *THROUGH* WITH IT, TOO, KIDDIES! AND AFTER THAT, EVERYBODY LIVED *HAPPILY EVER AFTER*... PRINCE DASHING WITH ONE-ARMED PRINCESS BUTTERCUP... AND BLACK-HEARTED KING BLACKHEART WITH *HIS* HANDY WIFE! HEE, HEE! AND THAT'S MY *FAIRY TALE* FOR THIS ISSUE! *GRIM?* THAT'S WHAT I *TOLD* YOU! 'BYE, NOW!



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HMMPH! FAIRY TALES! WHAT NEXT? PRETTY SOON THAT OLD HAG WILL BE TELLIN' 'FUNNY-LITTLE-ANIMAL' HORROR STORIES! WELL, *NOT ME!* I'M FROM THE OLD SCHOOL! STRAIGHT GORE... THAT'S MY LORE, YEP! IT'S YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER, READY TO DIG UP ANOTHER TALE OF TERROR FROM MY COLLECTION! SO SIT DOWN ON THAT SAMPLE-CASE, AND I'LL BEGIN THE BLOOD-CURLER I CALL...

DEATH OF SOME SALESMEN!



YOUR NAME IS *STUART THATCHER!* YOU'RE A SALESMAN...A TRAVELING SALESMAN! FOR TWO YEARS NOW YOU'VE BEEN DRIVING THESE BACKWOODS ROADS, HUSTLING YOUR LINE! YOU GO FROM FARMHOUSE TO FARMHOUSE, MAKING YOUR PITCH! SOMETIMES YOU HAWK A SALE...MOSTLY *NOT!* TODAY LOOKS LIKE ONE OF YOUR BAD DAYS...

NO! NO, I SAID!
NOW SCRAM!

WELL, THANKS
ANYWAY! I'LL
DROP BY AGAIN!



BLACK & WHITE

SOME OF THESE BACKWOODS ROADS ARE **SMOOTH**... SOME ARE **PRETTY SAD**! LIKE THE ONE YOU'RE ON NOW! IT'S **MUDDY AND RUTTED**! YOUR BEAT-UP OLD CAR ROCKS AND ROLLS! THE SKY ABOVE YOU IS BLEAK AND GREY! YOU CURSE SOFTLY TO YOURSELF...

LOOKS LIKE RAIN, DRAT IT! AND HERE I AM IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE!



AND THEN IT STARTS COMING DOWN! THE RAIN! IT FLOODS ACROSS YOUR WINDSHIELD...PATTERING LOUDLY ON THE CAR ROOF! YOU CAN HARDLY SEE THE ROAD AHEAD! THE RUTS AND HOLLOWES FILL WITH WATER! YOU BOUNCE ALONG...SPLASHING THROUGH THEM...

WELL, *THIS* DAY IS **SHOT**! I WON'T MAKE ANY MORE SALES IN *THIS* ROTTEN WEATHER! MIGHT AS WELL JUST **KEEP GOIN'** TILL I HIT A **MAIN ROAD**, AND HOLE UP IN A **MOTEL** FOR THE NIGHT!



THE RAIN CONTINUES! SUDDENLY YOUR CAR SAGS AWKWARDLY TO THE RIGHT! THE ENGINE COUGHS AND STALLS! YOU'RE OVER YOUR WHEEL HUBS IN A PUDDLE...

OH X?!! **STUCK!**
NOW WHAT?



YOU SIT THERE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT RAIN-FLOODED MUDDY BACKWOODS ROAD, COUNTING TO TEN! THEN YOU LOOK AROUND...

MUST BE A FARMHOUSE SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE! MAYBE THEY CAN PUT ME UP!



YOU PEER THROUGH THE GLOOMY DOWNPOUR! THEN YOU SEE IT! **THE HOUSE!** IT STANDS BLACK AND SOMBER, OUTLINED AGAINST THE GREY SKY.

HEY! WHAT LUCK! THERE'S A HOUSE...UP ON THAT **HILL!** I'LL MAKE A **BREAK** FOR IT!



YOU LEAP FROM YOUR STALLED AUTO AND START FOR THE HOUSE! THE RAINDROPS SLAM AGAINST YOUR FACE! YOUR CLOTHES BEGIN TO SOP UP THE WETNESS! YOU SPLASH THROUGH THE RAIN-SWELLED PUDDLES...

HOPE THEY'VE GOT A **PHONE** SO I CAN CALL IN FOR A **TOW!**



AND THEN YOU'RE ON THE PORCH! THE HOUSE IS OLD AND WEATHERBEATEN! THE SHUTTERS ARE BROKEN AND HANG CRAZILY FROM RUSTED HINGES! THE BLINDS ARE DRAWN! THERE'S NO SIGN OF LIFE! BEHIND YOU, THE RAIN POURS NOISILY OFF THE PORCH ROOF...

LOOKS DESERTED! WELL! I'LL KNOCK ANYWAY...



YOU POUND YOUR FIST ON THE FLimsY DOOR! THE SOUND ECHOES THROUGH THE HOUSE! FOR A MOMENT ALL IS STILL SAVE FOR THE RAINDROPS! THEN HEAVY FOOTSTEPS APPROACH! THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN...

YES?
HELLO! I WONDER IF YOU CAN HELP ME! I'M A TRAVELING SALESMAN, AND MY CAR...



THE OLD WOMAN WHO HAS ANSWERED THE DOOR GRINS! SHE STEPS BACK, HER FACE BEAMING...

A SALESMAN! COME IN! COME IN!
MY CAR STALLED DOWN ON THE ROAD! THE WIRES MUST HAVE GOTTEN WET!



THE OLD WOMAN CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND YOU AND CALLS...

EBAN! IT'S A SALESMAN!
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, HENRIETTA!
I WONDER IF YOU PEOPLE HAVE A PHONE!



AN OLD MAN COMES INTO THE ROOM, SMILING WARMLY...

PHONE? NOPE! NO PHONE! SALESMAN, EH?
OH, THAT'S TOO BAD! I THOUGHT I MIGHT CALL IN FOR A TOW! I'M STUCK... DOWN AT THE ROAD!
CAN WE OFFER YOU ANYTHING, MR... MR...



THATCHER, MA'AM! STUART THATCHER! I'M WITH THE JACKSON COMPANY! A... A CUP OF COFFEE WOULD HIT THE SPOT... IF IT WOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH TROUBLE!

COME INTO THE KITCHEN, MR THATCHER!
NO TROUBLE AT ALL, MR. THATCHER!



YOU FOLLOW THE NICE OLD COUPLE INTO THEIR KITCHEN! YOU LOOK AROUND AND GASP! YOU'RE AMAZED! THAT OLD HOUSE WITH SUCH MODERN APPLIANCES...

MY! YOU CERTAINLY HAVE ALL THE LATEST CONVENIENCES, FOLKS!
OH, YES! YOU SEE, WE'VE HAD SALESMEN VISIT US BEFORE!
TELL 'EM 'BOUT THE FIRST ONE, HENRIETTA! THE ONE THAT SOLD US THE REFRIGERATOR!



THE OLD WOMAN'S FACE DARKENS! SHE STARES AT YOU... WHISPERING HOARSELY...

OH, YES! THE REFRIGERATOR! EBAN AND I'D SAVED FOR YEARS, MR. THATCHER! PUT AWAY EVERY CENT WE COULD MANAGE! WE'D ALWAYS WANTED ONE! THEN THAT SALESMAN CAME... THE ONE THAT SOLD US THAT ONE!
THE DIRTY NO GOOD CROOK!



YOU SHIFT UNCOMFORTABLY IN YOUR SEAT, STUART THATCHER! THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THIS OLD COUPLE, BUT YOU CAN'T PUT YOUR FINGER ON IT...

CROOK? IT DIDN'T WORK, MR. THATCHER! THE REFRIGERATOR DIDN'T WORK! HE CHEATED US! TOOK OUR LIVES' SAVINGS!



THAT'S TOO BAD! I...I'M SORRY!

THAT'S WHY...FROM THEN ON... WE VOWED THAT IF ANY OTHER SALESMAN TRIED TO SELL US ANYTHING...



...WE'D MAKE SURE IT WORKED FIRST!

THAT'S WISE!

TELL 'IM 'BOUT THE FREEZER, EBAN!



EBAN POINTS TO THE LARGE FROZEN-FOOD LOCKER STANDING NEXT TO THE REFRIGERATOR...

WHEN HE CAME...THE ONE SELLING THE FREEZER...WE MADE SURE IT WORKED!

SHOW 'IM, EBAN!



EBAN FLINGS OPEN THE FREEZER LID! YOU LOOK DOWN! SUDDENLY, YOUR HEART STOPS! A WAVE OF NAUSEA SWEEPS OVER YOU! INSIDE THAT LOCKER IS A FROST-COVERED BLUE-SKINNED BODY...

GOOD LORD!

MADE SURE, ALL RIGHT! TRIED IT OUT ON HIM... THE SALESMAN!

GOOD! SEE?



YOU LOOK AROUND, FRANTICALLY! THESE PEOPLE ARE MAD! EBAN PATS THE NEW ELECTRIC STOVE...

FELLER THAT CAME WITH THIS WAS REAL NICE! BUT THAT FIRST CROOK WAS NICE ALSO! CAN'T TRUST 'EM JUS' 'CAUSE THEY'RE NICE! TRIED THE STOVE OUT, TOO!

OPEN THE OVEN DOOR, MR. THATCHER!



YOU PULL DOWN THE OVEN DOOR... JUST A CRACK! YOU STEP BACK HORRIFIED! THE DOOR FALLS OPEN ALL THE WAY! INSIDE IS A BROWN-CRUSTED WELL-ROASTED CORPSE...

STOVE WORKED GOOD, TOO! SEE!

DON'T GET ANY IDEAS ABOUT RUNNIN', MR. THATCHER! THIS SHOT-GUN'S LOADED...

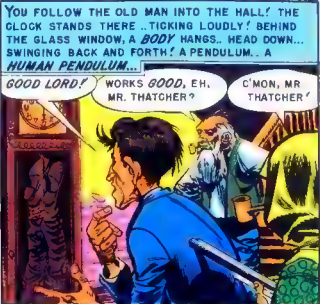




GASP

SHOW 'IM THE **GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK**, EBAN! FELLER SHOWED UP. TRYIN' TO SELL US ONE OF **THEM THINGS** ONE DAY!

C'MON!



GOOD LORD!

WORKS GOOD, EH, MR. THATCHER?

C'MON, MR THATCHER!



FELLER CAME ALONG SELLIN' **VACUUM CLEANERS!**

OPEN UP, EBAN!



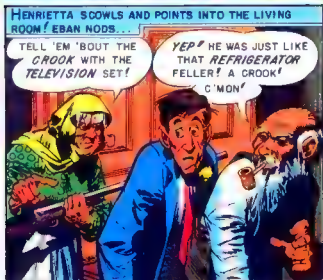
CHOKO..

THEM **VACUUM CLEANERS** WORKED **GOOD, TOO!**



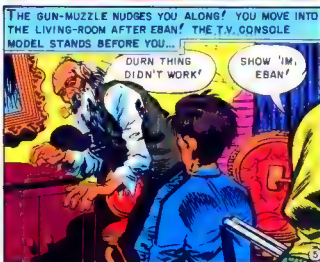
CARE T'SEE **HOW** GOOD IT CLEANS, MR THATCHER?

N-NO... TH-THANKS!



TELL 'EM 'BOUT THE **CROOK** WITH THE **TELEVISION SET!**

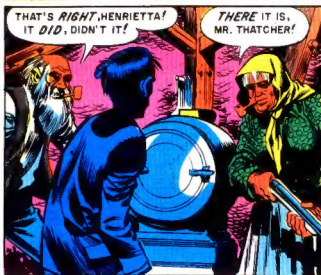
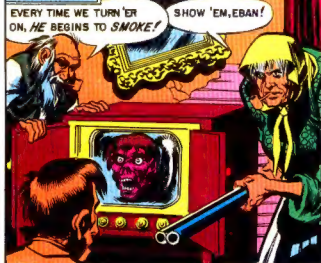
YEP! HE WAS JUST LIKE THAT **REFRIGERATOR** FELLER! A **CROOK!** C'MON!



DURN THING DIDN'T WORK!

SHOW 'IM, EBAN!

EBAN SWINGS OPEN THE CONSOLE DOORS! A CHARRED WIDE-EYED FACE STARES OUT AT YOU FROM BEHIND THE ESCUTCHEON...





YOU TURN AWAY FROM THE GORY SIGHT! EBAN GRINS AT YOU... AN IDIOTIC TOOTHLESS GRIN...

BY THE WAY, MR. THATCHER! WHERE'S YOUR PRODUCT?

BACK... IN THE CAR!



DOES IT WORK, MR. THATCHER?

I...I DON'T KNOW!

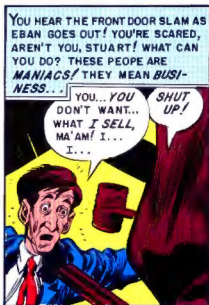
GET IT, EBAN!



EBAN SCURRIES UP THE CELLAR STAIRS! HENRIETTA STANDS, LEERING AT YOU... THE GUN POINTED...

WE'LL SOON SEE, MR. THATCHER! WE'LL SEE IFN IT WORKS!

P-PLEASE! I'LL... I'LL PAY YOU... ANYTHING!



YOU HEAR THE FRONT DOOR SLAM AS EBAN GOES OUT! YOU'RE SCARED, AREN'T YOU, STUART? WHAT CAN YOU DO? THESE PEOPLE ARE MANIACS! THEY MEAN BUSINESS...

YOU... YOU DON'T WANT... WHAT I SELL, MA'AM! I... I...

SHUT UP!

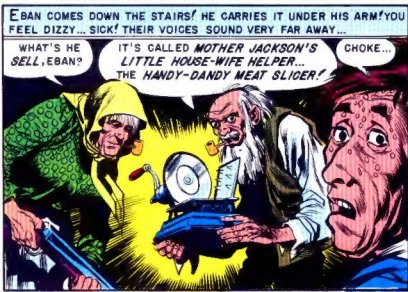


THE DOOR SLAMS AGAIN! FOOTSTEPS RESOUND THROUGH THE HOUSE...

NEED HELP, EBAN?

NOPE! I CAN MANAGE!

P-PLEASE!

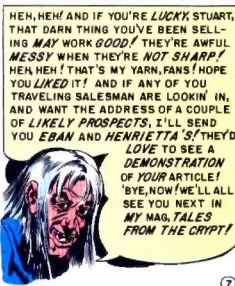


EBAN COMES DOWN THE STAIRS! HE CARRIES IT UNDER HIS ARM! YOU FEEL DIZZY... SICK! THEIR VOICES SOUND VERY FAR AWAY...

WHAT'S HE SELL, EBAN?

IT'S CALLED MOTHER JACKSON'S LITTLE HOUSE-WIFE HELPER... THE HANDY-DANDY MEAT SLICER!

CHOKO...



HEH, HEH! AND IF YOU'RE LUCKY, STUART, THAT DARN THING YOU'VE BEEN SELLING MAY WORK GOOD! THEY'RE AWFUL MESSY WHEN THEY'RE NOT SHARP! HEH, HEH! THAT'S MY YARN, FANS! HOPE YOU LIKED IT! AND IF ANY OF YOU TRAVELING SALESMAN ARE LOOKIN' IN, AND WANT THE ADDRESS OF A COUPLE OF LIKELY PROSPECTS, I'LL SEND YOU EBAN AND HENRIETTA'S! THEY'D LOVE TO SEE A DEMONSTRATION OF YOUR ARTICLE! 'BYE, NOW! WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG, TALES FROM THE CRYPT!

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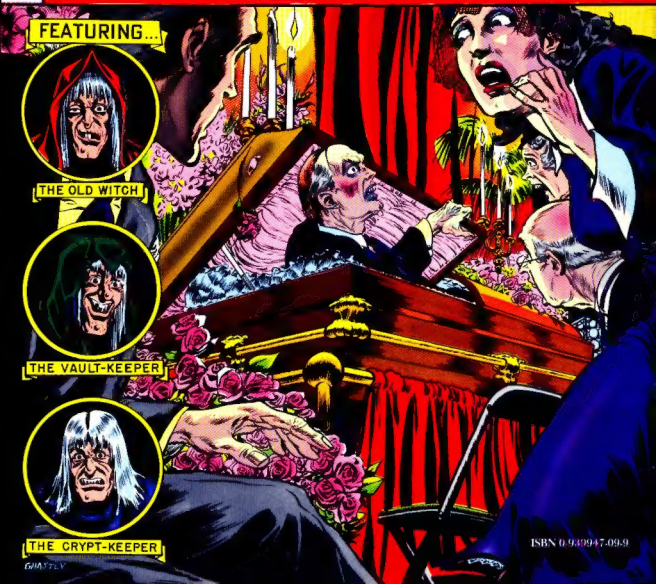
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